

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project

Oral History Interview

with

TED TETSUO KOBATA

June 28, 1996

July 2, 1996

July 3, 1996

Sacramento, California

By Frank Iritani
Florin Japanese American Citizens League
and
Oral History Program
California State University, Sacramento



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

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PREFACE

In the summer of 1987, a small group of people from the Florin JACL met at Mary and Al Tsukamoto's home to plan a new project for the organization. Because of the unique history of Florin, we felt that there were special stories that needed to be preserved. The town of Florin, California was once a thriving farming community with a large Japanese American population. The World War II internment of persons of Japanese ancestry living on the west coast, devastated the town and it never recovered. Today there is no town of Florin; it has been merged into the larger county of Sacramento. Many Japanese Americans who reside throughout the United States, however, have their origins from Florin, or have relatives and friends who once had ties to this community. The town may no longer exist, but the spirit of the community continues to survive in people's hearts and memories.

Several hours have been devoted to interviewing former Florin residents. The focus of the interviews was on the forced internment and life in the relocation camps, but our questions touched on other issues. We asked about their immigration to the United States from Japan, pre-war experiences, resettlement after the war and personal philosophies. We also wanted to record the stories of the people left behind. They were friends and neighbors who watched in anguish as the trains transported the community away.

We have conducted these interviews with feelings of urgency. If we are to come away with lessons from this historic tragedy, we must listen to and become acquainted with the people who were there. Many of these historians are in their 70's, 80's and 90's. We are grateful that they were willing to share their experiences and to answer our questions with openness and thoughtfulness.

We owe special thanks to James F. Carlson, former Assistant Dean of American River College and to Jackie Reinier, former Director of the Oral History Program at California State University in Sacramento. Without their enthusiasm, encouragement and expertise, we never could have produced this collection of oral histories. We also wish to acknowledge the project members, volunteers, the Florin JACL which contributed financial support, Sumitomo Bank for their corporate donation, and the Taisho Young Mens Association which contributed some of their assets as they dissolved their corporation on December 31, 1991.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER

Frank Iritani, Florin Japanese American Citizens League [JACL]. [Please see Page iv]

INTERVIEW TIME AND PLACE

June 26, 1996, July 2, 1996, July 3, 1996
Home of Mr. and Mrs. Ted Kobata
3600 Faberge', Sacramento, California

TRANSCRIBING AND WORDPROCESSING

Mary Freeman, Member, Florin JACL, transcribed the interview in long-hand.
Utako Kimura, Member, Florin JACL, did the wordprocessing.

EDITING

Interviewee Ted Kobata, and Interviewer Frank Iritani edited the draft. Mr. Iritani prepared the Biographical Summary.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Some pictures are photo copied by Dan Inouye, Florin JACL member.

TAPES AND INTERVIEW RECORDS

Copies of the bound transcript and the tapes will be held by the Florin Japanese American Citizens League. The original tape recordings of the interviews are in the California State University, Sacramento Library along with the records relating to the interview. Master tapes are preserved at the California State University, Sacramento Archives, 6000 J Street, Sacramento.

INTERVIEWER - FRANK IRITANI

Frank Iritani is married to Joanne [nee Ono]. They have three children and five grandchildren. A former Christian minister and retired Social Service Worker, he resides in Sacramento, California. Frank is active in the Florin JACL, Centennial United Methodist Church and involved in several Asian American Activities. With wife Joanne, they wrote "TEN VISITS: Brief Accounts of Visits to all Ten Relocation Centers."

TRANSCRIBER - MARY FREEMAN

Mary [nee Kashiwase] is married to Amos P. Freeman, a retired Administrative Law Judge. She is a native of Livingston, California. Mary's family was interned in Amache Relocation Center [Internment Camp], Colorado, and has been a resident of Sacramento since 1948. She received an AA Degree from Sacramento City College in Social Sciences. She retired from the State of California as a medical transcriber following twenty years of service. Mary is mother of two sons and three daughters. She is an active, volunteer member of the Florin JACL and its Oral History Project.

TRANSCRIBER - UTAKO KIMURA

Utako Kimura, a native of Sacramento, has been retired from the State of California since October 1991. She was interned in the Arboga, California Assembly Center in May 1942, Tule Lake Internment Camp in June 1942, and from October 1943, the Minidoka Internment Camp [Idaho]. A member of the Florin JACL, she is on its Oral History Project Committee. Her other volunteer work includes California State Capitol Museum Volunteers Association, and the Asian Community Center's fund raising activity.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Ted Tetsuo Kobata was born July 20, 1924 in Sacramento, California. He married Miyo Frances Iwasa on March 24, 1951 in Sacramento. They are the proud parents of Glenn, Hannah, and Stanley, and doting grandparents to Thomas, Ann and Kyle.

Ted Kobata's father Shigejiro, as with many Nikkei, came to America from Hiroshima, Japan and worked as a migrant farm laborer. His mother, also from Hiroshima, was Shizuyo Kagari Kobata. The birthplaces of Ted's siblings indicate the different places his father worked and the various jobs. Yoneko, the oldest was born in 1919 in Armona near Hanford, California where he worked as a farm laborer. Tomiko was born in 1921 in Vernalis near Tracy, California where he worked as a sharecropper. He worked in the orchards around Mountain View in the San Jose area. The rest of the family, Ted, Yoshiko, Jim and Gladys were born, grew up, and attended Edward Kelley School in the Mayhew area of Sacramento County. Except for Tomiko, they still live in the area.

The Kobata family was interned in the Poston, Arizona Internment Camp during World War II. Ted, apparently not satisfied with staying in camp, went out to Ontario Oregon, to help with the sugar beet harvest. Before Poston Internment Camp officially closed in November 1945, he had moved the whole family to Ontario, and then in February 1945, returned to Mayhew.

The return and resettlement was facilitated by the help and friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Jim J. Fairbairn who looked after their property during the War. The Kobatas grew mainly grapes and strawberries. Ted got interested in construction work and became engaged in and continues building contract work to this day. At the same time, with the support and help of his wife Frances, they raised three children.

Ted did not go to college but he did take extension classes. He and Frances encouraged their three children to go---Glenn to California State University, Sacramento; Hannah to Sacramento City College; and Stanley to the University of California at Davis.

The more outstanding Kobata-supervised/volunteer construction projects are the Gedatsu Church of America [1983]; the Mayhew Baptist Church [1988]; the Poston Internment Camp Memorial Monument [1992]; and the Poston Internment Camp Kiosk [1995]. He also volunteered with the dismantling of two units of the Heart Mountain, Wyoming Internment Camp Barracks [1994], and then helped with the reassembly adjacent to the National Japanese American Museum in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo. The Barracks were a part of the Museum's Exhibit "America's Concentration Camps", 1994-1996.

A member of the Florin Japanese American Citizens League and its annual Time of Remembrance programs, Ted volunteered leadership of the Internment Camp Barrack Replica Project. The replica barrack, 12 feet by 16 feet in dimension, is furnished with a Camp bed [an Army cot]; wooden laundry drying rack; one bare light bulb; a single-burner hot-plate; a black, cast-iron pot-bellied stove; a dresser [made in Camp]; and a chair. The barrack replica was on display at the Elk Grove Unified School District, the Annual Time of Remembrance Program at the Florin Buddhist Church Hall, and the California State University, Sacramento, Library Archive Japanese American Collection Exhibits. Ted organized a faithful volunteer crew of five to seven people, including brother Jim, to haul the barrack components and its Camp furnishings, to set-up and take-down at each exhibition period.

All ten Internment Camps now have some type of monument[s] of varying sizes and shapes. Some Camps have small cemeteries. However, the Poston Internment Camp Monument seems the most impressive with its imposing single column Memorial symbolizing "Unity of Spirit", informational Kiosk at the Monument fenced entrance, and the Masunaga-Takehara Landscape and Water Fountain. Mr. Kobata was the lead volunteer and contractor supported by a Poston Memorial Monument Committee. The Committee met regularly for planning, fund raising, and maintenance. These monthly meetings were usually held in Sacramento but a few were held in Los Angeles by the Poston Camp I and Camp III internees.

It is to be noted, due to lack of adequate living arrangements close by the monument construction site, Ted bought a motorhome to live in and work out of, during Arizona's triple-digit hot summer months of August and September. At least six trips were made from his Sacramento home and construction base, a ten to eleven hours drive. He recruited and supervised a crew of fifteen volunteers including several spouses to assist with the meals. Besides volunteering his time and services, Ted donated the use of his construction equipment and technical knowledge. At the same time, he elicited the fine cooperation of the Colorado River Indian Tribe [CRIT] personnel, working closely together with them. The Poston Internment Camp was situated on CRIT land. Led by Ted Kobata and with support from his family, relatives, friends; the Monument Committee; and the CRIT people, the Poston Internment Camp Memorial Monument and later improvement such as the Kiosk, became a reality.

In other community service, Ted has been a panel member on the Oral Interview Boards of the Sacramento County Building Inspection Division Field Office for the past twenty-five years. During the years his two sons were growing up, Ted was Assistant Boy Scout Leader of Troop #250, and helped with building projects at O-Ki-Hi Scout Camp. The construction of the American Little League Snack Bar and Meeting Rooms was yet another volunteer project.

Ted Kobata continues to dedicate his time and services to many worthy projects for a grateful community.

[Session 1, June 28, 1996]

[Begin Tape 1, Side A]

IRITANI: History for Mr. Ted Kobata in his home, June 28, 1996. We can start, Ted, with your parents. Could you tell us where they came from and where they landed or arrived in the United States?

KOBATA: My father Shigejiro was born in 1883 in Hiroshima-Ken, city of Fukuyama. And my mother Shizuyo Kagari was born in Hiroshima-Ken, also in the city of Fukuyama in 1997.

IRITANI: Nineteen [19] what?

KOBATA: I mean 1897.

IRITANI: 1897. Okay, yeah, but your father came over first?

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: By himself?

KOBATA: My father came as we recalled over the dinner table, that he came here when he was sixteen years old, so that put him around 1900. And, first he came to work on the railroad. I don't know whether it was a railroad contract or

KOBATA: whether he just came to work on the railroad, but regardless, he came to Spokane, Washington.

IRITANI: Spokane, Washington. Let me check this. [interruption, recorder off].
Now, we are recording. Okay. Again, your father came over at a very young age. Did he ever mention to you why he came over?

KOBATA: Well, I understand during that period, Japan's economy was real bad, and I guess he wanted to reach out to see if he could better himself and probably the family.

IRITANI: Okay.

KOBATA: So, therefore, I think he came to the United States, and probably when he came to Spokane, and it was very cold there, so he didn't, as I recall, through his conversation, that it was very cold; therefore, he didn't stay there very long and headed to Southern California, and the earliest picture we have of him in the United States was around 1903. And then, to verify that he was in Southern California in 1907, he made a contract to lease grounds at the price of five dollars an acre. With the signing of the contract, he was to pay two-and-a-half [\$2.50] and then that particular June, he was supposed to pay the balance of \$2.50. And then, we also had - we are verifying that he was in that area. It was in 1908, he made a contract with the syrup company* in Southern California to pick and deliver figs, and that contract was for \$18.00 a ton, and he was to be paid on delivery or when he demanded payment.

*See copy of contract dated July 29, 1908 in Appendix

IRITANI: Going back when your father came over, did he have any brother or any relatives over, or was he the first in his family to come to the United States?

KOBATA: He was the first. I don't recall having any other relation here except a distant relation in Southern California.

IRITANI: Okay. I think I recall you mentioning that he worked as sort of a migrant laborer, and from the birth certificates of your brothers and sisters, we could tell where he traveled. Let's see, Yoneko was the oldest. Where was she born?

KOBATA: She was born in the little town of Armona [California].

IRITANI: Armona.

KOBATA: The closest city there, I would say, is Hanford [California].

IRITANI: Hanford. And Tomiko?

KOBATA: She was born in Vernalis. This is another small town, and the largest, closest town was Tracy [California].

IRITANI: Tracy. Then, you were third. You were born in Sacramento?

KOBATA: Well, my sister Yoshiko below me, she noticed on her birth certificate, she was sixth born in the family, and so she became curious. So, there was, below my sister Tomiko and myself, there was twins born prematurely, and they were born in Mountain View [California]. So, this is how I was able to trace the migration of the family.

IRITANI: Now, these twins were born before you or after you?

KOBATA: Yeah, between Tomiko, before me.

IRITANI: Oh, before you. In Mountain View?

KOBATA: Yeah, in Mountain View, and I understand one lived about a little over two months, and the other lived a little over four months.

IRITANI: And then Yoshiko was born, I think, in 1927. Where?

KOBATA: In Sacramento. And I also was born in Sacramento.

IRITANI: And, the rest of them - Jim and Gladys?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: All Sacramento?

KOBATA: Yeah, all Sacramento.

IRITANI: Okay, well, you mentioned little bit about before the war, growing mostly grapes and strawberries. Is that right?

KOBATA: That is right. Uh huh. Strawberries, mainly.

IRITANI: Mainly strawberries?

KOBATA: A little bit of grapes.

IRITANI: And, most of the other Japanese families were engaged in strawberries and grapes, also.

KOBATA: Yeah. Mainly around where we lived, the soil is very shallow and, therefore, we couldn't grow deep-rooted type of trees. However, those people that lived closer to the river, who had river bottom soil, they raised truck farms.

IRITANI: Were you able to acquire or buy some land at this time at some place?

KOBATA: We were always on leased land; however, when my older sister became twenty-one [years old] that was in the latter part of 1940, through her name, my father purchased some land in 1941.

IRITANI: Just before the war?

KOBATA: [Laughter] That's right. Just before the war.

IRITANI: It was still in your sister's name? He couldn't purchase land in his own name?

KOBATA: Right. Correct.

IRITANI: And how many acres was that?

KOBATA: Oh, around twenty-three acres.

IRITANI: And, what you, uh, strawberries? Was it mostly strawberries or grapes?

KOBATA: What we bought was virgin land - pasture land - and, of course, we initially had to have a well-digger drill a well, and then he installed pump so we could have water for that particular land.

IRITANI: Okay. Well, before the war, I think you helped out with the farm. Also, didn't you have job on the outside?

KOBATA: Well, I was seventeen [years old]. So I was still a Junior in High School when the war broke out. So I was helping on the farm, and also during the summer vacation I worked on other farms, go pick fruits, and then during the Fall, we used to go knock walnuts because, at that time, there was no machinery. as such, to knock the walnuts. Like today, it's shook by equipment. But, in those days, the high school kids were climbing the [laughter] tall walnut trees using mallets and bamboo sticks.

IRITANI: Did you ever fall down out of the tree?

KOBATA: No! [Laughter] Heck no. We were - I guess we pretty good at that, you know, although the walnut trees are pretty slippery.

IRITANI: Yeah, and they grow pretty high too.

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: That was sort of dangerous work, wasn't it?

KOBATA: Yeah. well that's why they had all of us high school kids, you know, get up and climb the trees.

IRITANI: Yeah. That was interesting. I think once you mentioned something about a painting job. Were you into that?

KOBATA: Oh, no. That was when we were in the Assembly Center [Internment].

IRITANI: Oh, Assembly Center. Okay. Well, let's see here. Was there much prejudice and discrimination just before Pearl Harbor, as you recall.

KOBATA: Well, I guess I was rather fortunate because, like when going to high school, in my sophomore year, I played for the Junior Varsity and we took the championship; therefore, in my Junior year, the coach got me on the Varsity team. And that was, I thought, looking back now, you know, if they were prejudiced, I guess I wouldn't have never got to play for the Varsity team. So, I felt that I was fortunate to have - even though the conditions were bad for the Nisei, I thought, you know, being able to participate in different things, I thought I was pretty fortunate.

IRITANI: What high school? Sacramento High School?

KOBATA: Yes, Sacramento High School. We used to drive. From home to Sacramento High School was about eleven to twelve miles, and to get to school, whoever that's the oldest in the neighborhood would take the family car, and we would all get into that particular car, and that meant that we'd share the ride. That's how we got to school. They didn't have any bus system or anything, so it was through our own effort that we got to school.

IRITANI: Let's see. I have record here about your father?

KOBATA: Yeah. We spoke about my father's earlier years in Southern California.

IRITANI: Oh yes.

KOBATA: So, of course, I mentioned about him contracting to pick figs and deliver figs. Uh, he was at the San Fernando Mission ... I guess getting tutored in English ... and probably Spanish there, because, uh, back in 1947, one of my good friends that used to live in Sacramento, while living in Los Angeles, passed away, so we attended his funeral, and I remember my Dad telling me, you know, he would like to stop at the San Fernando Mission, and he remembered exactly where it was, and he told me about the story, you know, that he was tutored there, and, uh, I guess - I'm not sure - he maybe lived there at some period there.

IRITANI: Let's see. We already talked about your brothers and sisters being born in these various places where your father had traveled. So, I think we sort of passed over when your father came over, he came over by himself. Now, how did he happen to get his wife, so to speak? Was she a picture bride?

KOBATA: No, uh, in - according to some of the old collection we have, he went to Japan probably early part of 1918, and then, I guess through baishakunin, they found my mother for him as a bride, and so he got married in - probably in 1918, probably around mid-summer, and then that Fall, they both left for the United States, and according to his passport, it says "Re-entry" on his part.

IRITANI: Re-entry? Yes.

KOBATA: Right. But I couldn't locate anyplace where it said when he first arrived here. So that - I guess that's why I was kind of curious, and I called up the Chamber of Commerce in Spokane, Washington to get information about immigrants coming to the Spokane area to do railroad work. And, this

KOBATA: particularly lady, she referred me to the Library Information Section, and I spoke to this lady at length, and she told me there was two major railroads there. I think she said one was Pacific Northern and one was Great Northern, and if she couldn't give me the information, she said probably the Railroad Society in Minneapolis, [Minnesota] may have some information. So, I'm still at the stage of trying to investigate [laughter] to follow exactly or what they may have. She told me they may even have a payroll record too.

IRITANI: Oh, yeah? You know, it would be interesting.

KOBATA: So, it's getting me more interested in this area, trying to trace it.

IRITANI: Well, I'd like to know a little bit more about your father and mother. Do you know what he did in Japan, how much schooling he had?

KOBATA: Yes. I mentioned about Mami Hayashi making a family tree for us, and she also wrote a letter that my father's, uh, I guess probably grandfather worked for the Mouri Tonosama family, and he was accountant.

IRITANI: Oh. Tonosama is the Lord?

KOBATA: Lord of the area. Yeah. and then probably his father became a farmer. And, my mother's side, they were farmers, and I think they were specializing in silkworm raising because one of the pictures shows a lot of racks, and I suppose that was how it was grown.

IRITANI: So, at that time, the economy wasn't too good. So a lot of these folks - our Isseis - left Japan?

KOBATA: Yeah. that's why, uh - and I understand through speaking with some of my friends, their fathers came to the Seattle [Washington] area to work on the railroad. So I guess at that particular - around 1900 - there was lot of Japanese immigrants came on the railroad.

IRITANI: Yeah. Well, my own father worked on the railroad for awhile, and he eventually ended up around Denver, Colorado where I was born. But, he left, like your father left the railroad work, and went into farming and growing vegetables.

Okay. Did your father or your mother mention about how living in Japan was compared to living in the United States? I think the Isseis worked pretty hard.

KOBATA: Well, my mother, she was kind of from a well-to-do family, average, well, I would say, you know, and she was educated well, plus I think she had a rather easy life.

IRITANI: Oh yes. Uh huh.

KOBATA: And, I guess what probably made her decide to get married and come to the United States was she used to hear about how United States had a lot of gold and that everything was plentiful and [laughter] she was sold on that area, and she wasn't thinking about coming here to work hard, as it turned out [laughter].

IRITANI: It turned out the opposite?

KOBATA: Yeah. They really, uh, worked hard.

IRITANI: Well, for some reason, many encouraged their children, like my parents encouraged us, to go to school and get an education. I presume that's what your parents did?

KOBATA: Yeah. Well, uh, we were all trying to become educated; however, the World War II kinda' changed all of that for many of us because we were put into Relocation Camps [Internment Camps], and of course, we were uprooted with leaving everything behind what the family had worked for. So, to continue on, especially for myself, when the War broke out and we relocated, I wasn't more concerned about education. I was more concerned about the welfare of the family and what we are going to do, you know

IRITANI: Surviving.

KOBATA: It was a time of indecision and not knowing who we are or what we can do or where can we go, and so I was feeling my way out to get out of Camp, which I did. After a short stay in Camp, I got out, but then it was trying to find a way to relocate ourselves to get established.

IRITANI: Recalling my own time, during the Thirties, I think it was a period of great depression, and also out in the Mountain States, we had a big drought. I suppose it was similar here where you lived at that time?

KOBATA: Well, just prior to World War II breaking out, I think most of families were doing quite well, or started to, because the depression had passed, and we were establishing ourselves economically on the up-turn. Of course, by no means were we wealthy, but we could see the future being more prosperous.

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay. I recall, because our parents spoke Japanese and the children, have like myself, Niseis spoke mostly English. We had a hard time communicating. Did you experience that.

KOBATA: No. I didn't.

IRITANI: You went to Japanese school?

KOBATA: Language barrier? I don't think I had that problem because

IRITANI: Your father spoke the Japanese language?

KOBATA: I grew up speaking Japanese with my mother and father. I didn't think I had any difficulty of communicating with my parents.

IRITANI: And, your father probably spoke pretty good English?

KOBATA: Well, he spoke English, but it was far from good. He spoke, but, uh

IRITANI: Yeah. Sure.

Were they able to get any kind of education here. Going to grade school to learn English? I think my parents started, but they didn't last very long.

KOBATA: I think my Dad like I mentioned, when he was near the San Fernando Mission, that's where he really got most of his education.

IRITANI: Oh. I see.

KOBATA: This is through night school.

IRITANI: He went to night school?

KOBATA: Oh yeah. Because you know, he worked during the daytime.

IRITANI: Okay. My mother hardly spoke any English. It was mostly broken English. Did your mother speak pretty good English?

KOBATA: She didn't speak English, very little, but I guess in her high school years, I believe she learned English, so she knew about the alphabet and everything basic for the English is like.

IRITANI: Many of the Nisei kids went to Japanese school. What was your experience like?

KOBATA: Being in the rural area, we just went to Sunday School in the morning, on Saturday and in the afternoon, we had Japanese language lessons. But, being that it was just a half a day and once a week, it was pretty hard to remember everything.

IRITANI: ... learn very much. Where was the Japanese School at? The Buddhist Church or the Baptist Church?

KOBATA: Where we're living, of course, we got there in 1924, and in 1930 they built a Mayhew Sunday School right across from where we were living, and that's where the Baptist minister used to preach in the morning, and then we learned Japanese language in the afternoon.

IRITANI: Who was teaching the Japanese?

KOBATA: Reverend Muraoka. He was an old Issei person that I remember.

IRITANI: Baptist Church?

KOBATA: Right!

IRITANI: Did he do other things? Did he help out on the farm?

KOBATA: No. He was kind of [to me, as I recall] he was kind of a gentleman teacher and a gentleman preacher. He was always dressed nice. I don't think he got his hands dirty that much.

IRITANI: Do you recall if he spoke very good English?

KOBATA: No. It was mostly lecturing in Japanese [laughter]. Although, when his daughter and son helped teach, of course, they would speak English.

IRITANI: How large was the class? Mostly girls or half and half?

KOBATA: Well, there must have been thirty or forty of us at various stages of learning.

IRITANI: Besides Japanese conversation, do you recall learning how to write Japanese - the katakana or kanji or your name?

KOBATA: Yeah! We learned katakana, hiragana, and then we learned to write our name in kanji. Of course, we got as far as learning some of the simpler characters. You know, it's easy to learn if someone tells us the method of learning. When I was doing construction work, this lady from Taiwan ... they were in the import/export business, and she was school teacher there. She was telling me how the characters came about, like the river and the tree, you know ... and the person. Gee, you know, if I was taught that way, to recall by a certain figure, then it probably would have helped me learn the characters much quicker. So, I guess it was the method of teaching, I think, has a lot to do with it.

IRITANI: How about Japanese movies? They used to, for the Isseis I think they showed. Do you recall any of those?

KOBATA: Yeah. I remember Sunday. Whenever the moving picture person came, the whole family would go. You know, we would go early to save seats by spreading the blanket. What I recall the most is a lot of samurai pictures. They were really good swordsmen [laughter].

IRITANI: Chanbara.

KOBATA: Yeah! So, that I recall ... a lot of samurai pictures.

IRITANI: This is more on the Buddhist side, but do you recall going to the Hana Matsuri in the Spring-time? I think it's sort of a Buddhist festival.

KOBATA: Yeah! Well, us being so far out in the country, we didn't go to odori Of course, maybe once a year, we might have gone to see the odori in Florin. For us, I guess it was closer to go to Florin, so we used to go to Florin odori.

IRITANI: Dancers were dressed in kimonos, were they?

KOBATA: Yeah. Right. So, it was, well maybe it was a Buddhist ceremony, but a lot of it, I remember, the girls were just learning odori as a means of artistry.

IRITANI: Do you recall having picnics and having Japanese food?

KOBATA: We used to have our community annual picnic in the Spring-time where you would have races, sack-type competitions, and tie the legs in double and relays. these were usually held in the meadow.

IRITANI: Everybody got a prize.

KOBATA: Right. [Laughter] Got a prize!

IRITANI: Do you recall the different Japanese foods that your folks made?

KOBATA: Well, a lot of the time when we go to picnic like that, I remember the nigiris, and it would have u-me' inside. I used to really like that. In fact, even today, you know, when I go out and someone makes that, boy, that's a treat to me! It's simple, but then there's something bout the u-me' that gives you a lift!

IRITANI: I guess that's where you learned to play baseball, huh? You watched your father? Did he play?

KOBATA: No. He didn't play, but he did go watch because this particular place, like where the Mayhew Sunday School was, there was a baseball diamond there, too. So, as a youngster, I used to chase a lot of foul balls, and then as a reward, they would let me bat.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay. So, how many brothers and sisters now?

KOBATA: I have one brother and four sisters, and I'm the third from the top.

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay. So, this is pre-war, and some of you are in high school, and some of you are still in grade school yet?

KOBATA: Right. Right. Two of my oldest sisters were out of high school already.

IRITANI: Uh huh. Do you remember what some of the activities that your sisters were involved in? They didn't play baseball, I presume. Was there a 4-H Club or Girl Scouts? Do you remember?

KOBATA: Well, yeah. My second sister, I guess, she was most intelligent among us, I guess.

IRITANI: What's her name?

KOBATA: Tomiko.

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay.

KOBATA: So, she was in, uh, she was in more honor clubs. My oldest sister, you know, since the family was - had hardship too, I guess, so she went out too - as a school girl and worked her way through high school that way.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Yeah.

KOBATA: So, I guess she had it a little more rough than we did.

IRITANI: Well, I think in the thirties, thirty-five, thirty-six, it was Depression time.

KOBATA: Yeah. It was nothing unusual to do that, I guess.

IRITANI: Yeah. Oh, that was - many families had girls uh.

KOBATA: I wouldn't say many, but some ...

IRITANI: Oh, some ...

KOBATA: ... working as school girls or ...

IRITANI: School girls?

KOBATA: ... waitresses who worked their way through school.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Did they live with the family?

KOBATA: Yeah. Right.

IRITANI: Okay.

KOBATA: My sister lived in ...

IRITANI: In town?

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: Yeah, uh huh.

KOBATA: Usually in town.

IRITANI: Yeah, okay.

KOBATA: So, uh, we were in the country.

IRITANI: Well, what was going on then, in 1940, just before the war? Do you remember anything or was it just normal?

KOBATA: Well, it seemed like just prior to the war, you know, most of the families started doing quite well, because in 1941, my Dad, using my oldest sister's name, started purchasing the ground [farm].

IRITANI: Oh, this is, uh - what was her name?

KOBATA: Yoneko.

IRITANI: Yoneko. He started purchasing land in her name?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay. How many acres was it?

KOBATA: Well, this was twenty-three acres ...

IRITANI: Oh, yeah. That's a pretty good size, and on ...

KOBATA: ... on Happy Lane.

IRITANI: And, uh, on Happy Lane.

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: And, what did you grow there?

KOBATA: Well, we started to raise strawberries.

IRITANI: Berries?

KOBATA: Well, actually in 1941, so the furthest we got was to put in the irrigation pump, you know and, the following year - that would be 1942, we would, you know, be farming on our own land. But then, the war came, and that short-lived that! However, we kept the land through those years, and that's what we came back to after the war.

IRITANI: Oh. You had somebody look after the farm?

KOBATA: Well, there was nothing to look after, then - so we took the pump out and then stored it in Mr. Jim Fairbairn's place ...

IRITANI: I see.

KOBATA: ... for storage.

IRITANI: Well, then during the war years while you're in Camp, then it was just lying idle?

KOBATA: Right. It was just a virgin area that needed to be developed yet.

IRITANI: And, other Japanese families did the same thing?

KOBATA: Well, most of the other families, they were more - uh - they were there a longer period ...

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... so, their already grapevines were pretty well established.

IRITANI: They were already owning their land?

KOBATA: Right. So, this area, most of the people in our neighborhood owned land.

IRITANI: Uh, huh. Yeah.

KOBATA: Yeah. I would say 100 percent were starting to own land. Let's put it that way, and ...

IRITANI: The parents are leasing in the children's names? [Laughter]

KOBATA: Yeah. In the children's names.

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay.

KOBATA: Well, - most - some of the people that bought earlier used some other one's son that became twenty-one [years old], so some of them, you know.

IRITANI: Well, how young were some of these children? Were there some that's under eighteen [years old] or ...

KOBATA: No, I think ...

IRITANI: ... fourteen or fifteen [years old]?

KOBATA: No, I think they ...

IRITANI: Mostly older?

KOBATA: ... Only honored twenty-one [year old] being the legal age.

IRITANI: Oh, twenty-one.

KOBATA: So that's why it took us longer to start the land ownership.

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah. I see. Sure.

KOBATA: So, I didn't think that because a person was born here and maybe seven or eight years old would start buying land. I think it was honored mostly if a person became twenty-one [years old].

IRITANI: Well, to get around the Alien Land Law, that they had to put it in their children's name, I guess.

KOBATA: Right!

IRITANI: Right. Well, things are going along pretty well before December the Seventh [the day in 1941 that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii].

KOBATA: Yeah [laughter]. I would say so. You know, everyone started to - uh - become - I won't say prosperous but, you know, doing better.

IRITANI: Yeah. Well, as I recall - the Depression was - I remember the Depression was pretty severe in 1934 and 1935. And then, in the beginning in the forties, I guess this is pre - uh - just before the war, so it was a little bit better. Do you recall?

KOBATA: Yes, it was - uh - quite disappointing when you see the families start to do well, you know.

IRITANI: Yeah, so they were in strawberries and grapes. And, how were they marketing it? Did they have their own co-ops or ...

KOBATA: Yeah, they had, uh ...

IRITANI: ... farmers markets?

KOBATA: They had Association for the grapes. And strawberries also had Association and Company for shipping berries out of the area.

IRITANI: Oh. Were there many that went to the canneries?

KOBATA: No, at that time we didn't send too many strawberries to the processing plant. That's after the War [World War II]. After the War, members start to ship it to Freezers.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... To preserve it.

IRITANI: Okay.

KOBATA: But before the war, it was mostly fresh market. Of course, grapes went to the, ah, what they didn't harvest for shipping went to the winery.

IRITANI: I grew up around Denver, and we took our truckload of stuff into downtown Denver [Colorado] - and - uh - early in the morning and sold them to store people, restaurant people. Did they have that kind of farmer's market?

KOBATA: Yeah. Okay. Okay. The - We were mostly grapes and strawberry farmers.
The people closer to the river - they were truck farmers, and they would, you know, market their thing early in the morning.

IRITANI: Vegetables.

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: ... Spinach, corn, squash ...

KOBATA: ... Carrots ...

IRITANI: ... Carrots. Quite a few of the Japanese were ...

KOBATA: Well, most of the truck farmers were along the river where the soil is deeper.

IRITANI: Oh.

KOBATA: ... Rich, more fertile ...

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... And easier to work, you know, more sandy area.

IRITANI: Yeah. Yeah. I see.

KOBATA: So there were quite a few truck farmers in different districts.

IRITANI: Yeah. Folsom and what other areas, uh - Folsom was included?

KOBATA: Well, Folsom when I was growing there weren't too many independent farmers farming in that area. They were managing the farm. Well, the Dam went in - Folsom Dam, uh.

IRITANI AND KOBATA: They [both talking at the same time] ...

KOBATA: And then there's a lot of families along Perkins used to manage hops.

IRITANI: Hops?

KOBATA: Yes.

IRITANI: What was hops for?

KOBATA: Oh, hops is for making beer ...

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

KOBATA: ... And, it was raised quite extensively along the American River, so during the summer-time, we would go work at the hops field just prior to start of the Fall year of the school year.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: ... And, we would, uh - the family would go pick hops and make enough money to buy clothes for that particular year.

IRITANI: Yeah. Uh Huh.

KOBATA: So, it was kind of interesting, you know. It seemed like, uh ...

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... Picking up - by picking prunes, also.

IRITANI: In the Northwest [Oregon and Washington States], kids would go up in Alaska - to work in salmon, fishing.

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: ... And canneries and so forth. So, how about in the outlying areas - Loomis - you every go out there before the war for anything?

KOBATA: No.

IRITANI: ... Or Stockton?

KOBATA: We worked in the summer and weekends. We worked quite a bit in this area. For instance, Mayhew area because there were orchards and there were walnut orchards ...

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... Toward Rancho Cordova, so, we did but I understand around the Loomis area. they had a lot of fruits.

IRITANI: Yeah. Pears.

KOBATA: Right. Plums.

IRITANI: Okay. The churches, were they pretty strong? Japanese School?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Did you still go to Japanese School while we were going to High School?

KOBATA: Right. Just, uh ... we had - I think it was just almost about a half-a-day Saturday.

IRITANI: Oh, half-a-day. Yeah.

KOBATA: So, uh, morning time, we had Sunday School, and then until noontime, and then afternoon was our Japanese Language School.

IRITANI: Well, there were two kinds - your Protestant Churches and the Buddhist Churches. Mayhew was a Christian Baptist Church, right?

KOBATA: The closest Buddhist Church for the Mayhew people was either Florin or Sacramento.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. What other Protestant Churches were there. Baptist?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Course, there's a big Methodist Church downtown - Fourth and O [Streets, Sacramento].

KOBATA: Right. Florin was the Methodist Church.

IRITANI: Oh, Florin - yeah.

KOBATA: And, of course, Sacramento had Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian.

IRITANI: The other denominations?

KOBATA: Yeah. Course, you know, they're a larger populated area.

IRITANI: Yeah. Well, the Gedatsu Church, you probably want to talk about later. When did that start?

KOBATA: Well, I understand the history of Gedatsu is, the founder of Gedatsu started probably prior to World War II, and then they introduced the teaching to the people here [United States].

IRITANI: ... Started before World War II?

KOBATA: No, they got in - during the Camp year, they became Gedatsu member.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: And, then one of the Happy Lane family became quite involved with the Gedatsu Church.

IRITANI: Yeah. Well, I never heard of it before I came to Sacramento.

KOBATA: So, when I went to San Francisco, and my wife Frances was at the bookstore, I went to look up Religion.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: And, I looked up Gedatsu Church, and I think the congregation was only about 178,000 members, whereas Shinto and Tenrikyo, they were, you know, having the millions; five million

IRITANI: Yeah. Yeah.

KOBATA: ... ten million, but Gedatsu was 178,000 members.

IRITANI: For this area, what was the largest or most active group - Buddhist or which Protestant Church?

KOBATA: Well, I would say since the Mayhew Sunday School was with the Baptist ...

IRITANI: Uh, huh.

KOBATA: ... That the majority of the people became Baptists.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: Although ...

IRITANI: This is pre-war [World War II] they were ...

KOBATA: From here, they didn't go to Florin too much. They - most kind of associated with the Sacramento Buddhist Church.

IRITANI: Yeah. Sacramento.

KOBATA: So, you know, this Mayhew area was more or less a strong Christian area ...

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... Because of ... I guess, like the Satow family was quite prominent in contributing their land to the Church.

IRITANI: Yeah. Okay, well, we're about November 1941. Were there any feelings or talk about war with Japan, do you recall?

KOBATA: Okay. I was following the current events as young as I was. I was following the current events quite closely.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: Japan's expansion into Asia, and Germany expanding into Europe, and I followed it pretty closely, so - it - the war didn't just start with Pearl Harbor. Of course, the War started with Pearl Harbor, but everything was brewing towards a war.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: ... I realized, at that time, I guess from about 1937, like Mather Field was already expanding, preparing for defense and preparing for war.

IRITANI: Oh, yeah. I see.

KOBATA: And, of course, because of the Asian conflicts going on there and the European conflict - so I kept pretty close to current events. And I also remember when [Japan] Ambassadors Kurusu [Saburo] and Nomura [Kichisaburo] were negotiating in Washington.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: Because in Japan, I know things weren't going very good.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: It didn't just - of course, Pearl Harbor was a surprise attack, but ...

IRITANI: Sure

KOBATA: It was working up towards a confrontation.

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: So, like I say, as young as I was, I was keeping track, and then we knew things weren't going good.

IRITANI: Well, then, where were you on December the Seventh?

KOBATA: Working on the farm.

IRITANI: Yeah. Oh, I see. So, you heard the news about Japan attacking Pearl Harbor. That was quite the big news.

KOBATA: Yeah. It was quite shocking, and knowing that it's the folks' Fatherland, you know, and then being Japanese, you know it's going to have a large effect on them, which it did.

IRITANI: Yeah. Do you remember any of the Christian ministers or what some of the community leaders said about the situation.

KOBATA: I - I don't recall.

IRITANI: Did you to stay calm and all that?

KOBATA: Other than just, we were following orders and the curfew hours and the distance to travel.

IRITANI: How about relation with the non-Japanese? Discrimination or were there ...

KOBATA: Well, it seemed like everything became quiet, you know, and actually they didn't call us ethnic names or anything that I can really recall.

IRITANI: Maybe your hakujin friends, they couldn't understand it either, huh?

KOBATA: Yeah. So, anyhow, I know I think people were more reserved about everything, you know. Maybe since we were born here and status, you know, it became kind of a cloudy situation, and ...

IRITANI: Yeah. Well, you don't know anything about Japan except perhaps what your folks told you, and this is your country; and so ...

KOBATA: So, I think we did the best we could, and I think also the school did the best they could.

IRITANI: Yeah. Did they continue on with Japanese School? Did they continue on with, uh ...

KOBATA: I think all the, other than, I think, all the things other than briefing us on what was happening.

IRITANI: When did they, uh ... well, there's places where the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] came and took the Issei leaders, the Buddhist ministers, and prominent community people?

KOBATA: Well, here it was mostly, uh, yeah, ministers, merchants, and whoever that went to Japan recently at that time.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: You know, they would be the ones.

IRITANI: They were picked up, were they?

KOBATA: But, in this area, there were very few because we ... very few because we were just, uh ...

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

KOBATA: ... And like my father, of course, you know, he never went back to Japan other than when he got married, and ...

IRITANI: Yeah. So, he wasn't under suspicion?

KOBATA: No [laughter]. Although, prior to the FBI coming, we were ordered to surrender short-wave radio, cameras, and weapons to the authorities. I forgot who it was but anyhow, with authority. And then, the FBI guy came to search and ransacked the house to make sure there was nothing ...

IRITANI: They came and searched your house?

KOBATA: Yeah, right.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: ... And ransacked it.

IRITANI: What did they find [laughter]?

KOBATA: Well, they found, one of the things they found was - I had this Model-T headlight, you know, and I was going to use for my backup light for my car, see ...

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

KOBATA: ... And they thought that they could use that, saying that is to alert the enemy plane or direct the enemy plane [laughter] ...

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

KOBATA: ... Which was ridiculous, you know.

IRITANI: Do you know any Issei or Nisei that was picked up and, well, probably it's Issei only that the FBI picked up and just took them to jail someplace?

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: Do you know anybody?

KOBATA: Yeah, it's mostly like in town like ...

IRITANI: Downtown?

KOBATA: Florin and Sacramento downtown.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: Like I tell you, mostly merchants, and whoever went to Japan.

IRITANI: Well, then, when did you first hear that you had to relocate?

KOBATA: Well, I guess, well, first I think there was a, well, the government didn't know exactly what to do. They sent out for volunteer evacuees, you know.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: ... Volunteer to Intermountain States.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: But then, that was a kind of hazardous thing to do unless you had someplace to go ...

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: You know, to have sponsor, you couldn't just take off and leave, so that wasn't very good either, but I know a lot of people that had friends either in - out of the restricted zone, they went to those areas.

IRITANI: Yeah, okay. Well, the [Executive Order] 9066 Order was, I forget the exact date.

KOBATA: I think it, wasn't it around February? I'm not sure either. Around February?

IRITANI: February of '42, [1942] was it? Oh yeah. Okay. Do you remember what happened when the [Executive] Order 9066 - they posted those signs around here?

KOBATA: Right. They posted, uh, there were a lot of signs here, and then eventually they gave us a location where to gather.

IRITANI: Yeah. Assembly Centers. Well, where did you go?

KOBATA: Assembly Center, but to gather to a certain area for departure.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Okay. Where did the people from this area go?

KOBATA: Okay. We went to Washington Grammar School, right where Highway 16 and Highway 50 "Y". You know, that's where we got on the train there.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. You got on the train - and where did you go?

KOBATA: So, we went to Pinedale, California which is north of Fresno.

IRITANI: Do you recall what you were able to take with you? Well, the preparations, that was something, huh? You had to get ready ...

KOBATA: Yeah. We had to store everything we had, you know, put them in boxes and store it. And then, I guess, we were allowed to carry maybe probably about a couple of suitcases apiece that I could remember. Not very much.

IRITANI: Okay. You mentioned this pump. It was an expensive pump. You dismantled that and stored it?

KOBATA: Yeah. We took the head part of the pump, or I guess what you'd call the part the electrical pumping part, you know, and you stored it. I left the shack, the base of the shack intact.

IRITANI: Oh, intact.

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: What other equipment? Did you have tractors or trucks?

KOBATA: Well, the car I was going to school with, I sold it to one of the friend of mine's cousin, so I thought I got a fair price at that time. You know, because I got \$250.00 for a '36 [1936] Ford which was pretty much the going price because I made the agreement to sell it quite early. And then we kept the old '34 [1934] Ford pickup which had a canopy on it. We saved it.

IRITANI: Yeah. Your furniture: stove, and dining, living, beds - what happened to those?

KOBATA: We stored it at Mr. Jim Fairbairn's Grange Hall as most Japanese did. You know, this Grange Hall was quite large, and I guess they owned the Grange Hall. They must have purchased it. And so, they had this Grange Hall on their property. So, most of the Japanese in the area did store into the Grange Hall.

IRITANI: What kind of arrangements did you make? You were willing to pay for the storage?

KOBATA: Well, no, I don't think there was anything like payment even mentioned. It was just goodness of his heart that he stored all the, uh ...

IRITANI: Yeah, okay.

KOBATA: ... All the belongings of the Japanese until he got all filled up.

IRITANI: Were there other arrangements? Like somebody else took over and continued on with the farming? I understand in Sacramento, their crops were about ready to be harvested, and after all that work, they had to abandon the crops almost ready for harvest.

KOBATA: Well, that was true of our area, too, because not knowing how long we were going to stay and everything, you know, we're hoping for the best, and we did continue to raise the crop. And of course, we abandoned it. Well, the strawberry crop was ready to be harvested and the grapes, of course, we took care of it as best we can until Evacuation. So, it was kind of devastating to see all that.

IRITANI: You didn't know where you were going? You didn't know when you were coming back?

KOBATA: That's right [laughter]. Unknown future, you know.

IRITANI: Yeah. A big question mark. Okay, so, your parents, your brothers and sisters - you didn't have any other relatives around here? An uncle or aunt?

KOBATA: No, we were pretty much, other than the distant relation in Southern California, so ...

IRITANI: So, you're the only Kobata family?

KOBATA: Kobata family what was here.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Yeah, okay. So, you got on the train, and - what was Pinedale like?

KOBATA: Well, Pinedale was, the area was where we went and where the temporary buildings were built was all on black top - like a street where there'd be all black top, and then they would have temporary tar-paper building built on top of that.

IRITANI: Was it at the Fair Grounds?

KOBATA: No. This was just open fields that I saw.

IRITANI: Open space. Yeah, okay.

KOBATA: And across from there was a fig orchard. Of course, that particular area was fenced up and we had a guard tower. And then the Evacuees dug a hole and built an outhouse, you know.

IRITANI: Oh, yeah.

KOBATA: And each outhouse got filled ... [laughter]. I wasn't on that crew but there was a crew that - and the toilet crew were always digging new holes [laughter].

IRITANI: Yeah, okay. How long did you stay there?

KOBATA: Okay, we stayed there from May, I think, the Twenty-Ninth to about July - about two months.

IRITANI: About two months, huh?

KOBATA: Yeah ... and then while I was there, I coached the big girls' softball team, and we won the championship, I remember. These girls were real tomboys [laughter]! They were, you know, from the farms, so they were really strong. They would really wallop the ball.

IRITANI: Oh, yeah. Okay.

KOBATA: And then I worked - I guess I was seventeen [years old] at the time - and I went to the paint shop to apply for work, and this fellow was from Tacoma, Washington. And being seventeen, but, he says, "Well, you know most of the fellows are from Sacramento," so he gave me a Paint-B foreman ...

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

IRITANI: This is Tape 2, Side A - continuing with the oral history interview of Mr. Ted Kobata.

Okay - Ted, you were talking about the paint job?

KOBATA: Yes, I believe the reason why this paint foreman from Tacoma, Washington, gave me a Paint-B assignment -- a Paint-B foreman assignment -- was because, in those days [I hate to kind of brag, but then], anybody who played for the varsity sports was pretty well-recognized. Since the word got around that I was [pause, laughter] or even the persons who played baseball for the American Legion or whatever, you know, that was a kind of status symbol. Anyhow, therefore, that is why I think I got this Paint-B foreman job. What we were assigned to do was to go outside the fence and paint the MP [Military Police] barracks in a camouflage color.

IRITANI: Did that pay you more than other jobs?

KOBATA: No, I don't think it paid any more.

IRITANI: Was it easier work than [pause, laughter]?

KOBATA: Well, it was kind of, like I say, a status symbol. Not only that, but we got to go outside the fence. And then, another thing, each one of the other painters had to go with me to go to the commissary to buy whatever he wanted. You know, you go about two at a time. I would be the one that would take them to the commissary to buy things, and a lot of the fellows, I remember, bought these Air Force [what do you call it?] Ray-Ban type of sunglass.

IRITANI: Sunglasses?

KOBATA: Sunglasses, yeah. Those were quite popular in those days. I recall that, and I remember Richard Oki . He was my paint mixer [laughter] into a big barrel, into a fifty-gallon barrel, with lime [a khaki colored lime], and he would mix it. That was his job.

IRITANI: What did your father do?

KOBATA: I can't remember what he did.

IRITANI: Or Jim, your brother -- what was he doing?

KOBATA: Oh, he was too young then. He was maybe, let's see, he was in his early teens.

IRITANI: And your sisters?

KOBATA: I don't know what they did. I don't know if they worked in the mess hall or what.

IRITANI: Okay.

KOBATA: Because we only stayed there for a two-months' duration.

IRITANI: Okay. And then, how was it? You were told that you were going to go on a train again and go some place else?

KOBATA: Yes, we were told we were going to Poston, Arizona.

IRITANI: Poston?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: How did the people take to that?

KOBATA: I don't know exactly how many people were in Pinedale [Assembly Center in Central California], whether there was 4,500 people or what. But, other than 750 of us from Sacramento [California], they were mostly from

KOBATA: Washington and Oregon -- Northwest people. We were sent to Poston, Arizona while the people from Washington and Oregon were sent to Tule Lake [Internment Camp].

IRITANI: Was one place better than the other or what?

KOBATA: Well, I would say Tule Lake [Internment Camp] would've been a more ideal place because when we got to Parker, Arizona, to that train station that particular morning, we looked out and there was sagebrushes, desert and [laughter]

IRITANI: It was hot?

KOBATA: Yes. So then the rain storm came, and then the dust storm came, and then of course following the dust storm, the rain storm came. After that, they [sagebrushes] all blew away at that time of year. Then, I thought, "Boy, they're gonna' sure take care of us in a way that we were [laughter] ... "

IRITANI: Do you remember the preparations? I guess you didn't have too much, so there wasn't much to getting ready.

KOBATA: When we arrived in Poston, there were people there already. I think we were in Camp II. Camp I was already filled, and Camp II had people there already. Then, following us was Camp III, and that was mostly the

KOBATA: San Diego [California] group. Most of the people in Camp II were from Central California and the Watsonville and Salinas [California] areas.

IRITANI: You didn't have any kind of schooling in Pinedale? That was sort of temporary?

KOBATA: That's right. Besides, it was summertime.

IRITANI: Oh, it was summer. Do you remember the circumstances or anything interesting of the hardships going down to Poston? Like you said, there was terrible weather down there -- hot.

KOBATA: I remember going through Bakersfield to Barstow [California]. I think we went through some tunnel I remember because

IRITANI: The Tehachapi Mountains?

KOBATA: Yes. It seemed like we went through a tunnel, and it [inside the train] got full of soot because of the tunnel. [laughter] That I recall, and it was hot.

IRITANI: Yes, Barstow is hot. How was Poston? You got off the train in Parker, and then from Parker to the [Internment] Camp site?

KOBATA: Yes. We got on the Army truck, and we got hauled to Poston which was about eighteen miles away.

IRITANI: You're in Poston now. Were the barracks already built, or did you help build up some barracks?

KOBATA: Each Block was completely built; that is, the barracks, the men's shower room, the toilets, the women's, and I guess there was the laundry room and the boiler room. That was all completed -- the units in each Block -- including the mess hall.

IRITANI: Were you able to get accommodations close to your family, your friends or people you knew, or was it strangers all over the place?

KOBATA: Most the Sacramento group was in Block 229, and the other Blocks were 207 and 208, so we were mostly in a group -- not scattered all over the Camp.

IRITANI: When you got there, was it Fall?

KOBATA: No, it was in July -- the end of July, towards the end of the month.

IRITANI: Do you remember what kind of jobs or assignments you had? Everybody had to do something.

KOBATA: Yes. Well, I signed up for recreational leader because that was easier for me to get into.

IRITANI: How about your father?

KOBATA: My father? I can't remember what he did.

IRITANI: What did the women do?

KOBATA: My oldest sister worked at the hospital as a nurse's aide, and my mother - I don't remember if she worked. I think my father -- I'm just trying to think of my father -- where he worked at. He might have worked at the -- oh yeah, he worked in agriculture.

IRITANI: Oh. They were starting to cultivate the land around there to grow something?

KOBATA: Yes, they were.

IRITANI: I understand it was barren.

KOBATA: Yes. They opened up the virgin ground by clearing the sagebrushes and mesquite trees, and of course, the land was pretty fertile.

IRITANI: Yes, the Colorado River bottom probably.

KOBATA: Right, so, being that it was fertile, it was easy raising crops.

IRITANI: Did they make preparations for school?

KOBATA: Well, initially, they were using unused barracks as a temporary school.

Before they used the school barracks, I went out in the first wave of sugar beet workers when the Amalgamated Sugar Company came to recruit sugar beet workers. I just didn't want to stay in Camp. Young as I was, I just didn't want to stay in Camp. I just wanted to work.

IRITANI: Well, how was the sugar beet work [laughter]? Hard work, wasn't it.

KOBATA: Yes, we contracted with the Amalgamated Sugar Company and went on a farm to work, north of Ogden [Utah] in Preston, Idaho.

IRITANI: Gosh, you went a long distance, huh?

KOBATA: Yes. Went to Preston, Idaho to do sugar beet work there. But then, on the way there, I remember we went on a train up to Salt Lake City [Utah], and we were marched down the road to catch a trolley car to get to Preston, Idaho. So people are looking and wondering if we were prisoners-of-war or what, as we walked down the street.

IRITANI: What did you do on that sugar beet farm?

KOBATA: It was September, so it was beet harvesting time. We helped harvest the beets, and then we also went potato picking. After we finished that area, they asked us if we wanted to go north to Caldwell, Idaho, because it was still the latter part of November, and some of the crops in the Caldwell area weren't harvested yet. The Sugar Company asked us, so I signed up to continue from Preston, Idaho.

IRITANI: Did your brother Jim go too?

KOBATA: No, No. He was thirteen years old.

IRITANI: He stayed back?

KOBATA: Yes, he was just twelve years old. So I went out with a bunch of young fellows.

IRITANI: Do you recall making any money?

KOBATA: Well, when we first went to Preston, Idaho, it was nine tons to an acre. Not knowing what sugar beets were like, anything bigger than carrots, I thought, was pretty big [laughter]. But then, we went to Caldwell, Idaho. The first farm we went to, we did three tons to an acre, and I said, "Gee, boy, we sure went to the wrong place." So we finished. I think it was about mid-December when we finished there, when it started to freeze, and we could no longer work, so we had to return to Poston, Arizona.

IRITANI: So you came back.

KOBATA: Yes, I came back to Poston, Arizona in December, and I think by April, I went out again because I just wanted to get out of there.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. What happened to your education? You weren't finished with high school

KOBATA: No, I was just a Junior in high school, but I wasn't thinking about my education. I was thinking about bettering myself by getting out of Camp, and then let the other thing take care of itself. I think that might have been my reasoning, because I thought Camp was no place to further anything. It was just confinement.

IRITANI: You didn't know how long you were going to stay in Camp?

KOBATA: Yes, so when I went out in 1943, I found out that I had a distant relation in Ontario, Oregon. That was the family where I had mentioned that my father had a distant cousin with eight daughters in Los Angeles. So the third

KOBATA: daughter of that Fukuda family was married to a person, and his brother was farming quite extensively in Ontario, Oregon. So that's how I ended up in Ontario, Oregon during War years.

IRITANI: Okay. Getting back to the Poston Camp -- was the Camp run pretty successfully or harmoniously, or were there any disturbances?

KOBATA: As far as the Camp -- running it -- I would say, with the Block Manager and everything, I would say it was run as efficiently as anything could be run.

IRITANI: Were you involved when they built that gym there? I think it was made of adobe.

KOBATA: That was Camp I, and we were in Camp II. In Camp II, I recall that when I came back in the Winter of '42 [1942], each Block had a turn donating their time, volunteering to make adobe blocks for the Grammar School and High School in Camp II.

IRITANI: So, all the three Camps donated?

KOBATA: No, each Camp functioned independently.

IRITANI: So, this gym was in Camp I.

KOBATA: Yes, that gym that you see today was in Camp I.

IRITANI: What did Camp II have?

KOBATA: Camp II had - I remember we made adobe for our school.

IRITANI: Oh, so you had adobe buildings too?

KOBATA: Yes, I guess adobe was the main material for construction. Of course, it was the least expensive.

IRITANI: It seems to me that you weren't too much interested in school.

KOBATA: I was interested, but I didn't think that that was a priority. I didn't think it was a priority to stay in Camp then.

IRITANI: I understand that there were quite a few ministers that came out of Poston. The highest proportion of the Nisei ministers later on came out of Poston. Do you recall any churches or Sunday Schools being organized, or weren't you very much involved then?

KOBATA: Well, I wasn't there long enough to appreciate all the doings there because, like I said, I was initially there two months, and after that maybe a little over three months.

IRITANI: Sort of "in and out", huh?

KOBATA: Right. I wanted to get out of there. I didn't think there was any future there. Not only that, I guess, unknowingly, I felt responsible to better the family by finding a future home for them. So it wasn't that I didn't want to get educated, but I tried to search for a better life.

IRITANI: Your father -- what was he doing mostly? And your mother? What kind of jobs did they have in Camp.

KOBATA: My Dad, I think, worked in agriculture, and my mother -- I don't know whether she worked, but I remember my older sister [like I said] worked as a nurse's aide, and my other sister worked in a drama class, you know, because of the entertainment. Then, I remember when they brought in the camouflage net, she worked at the factory making camouflage. I guess it was like a big burlap, you know, making the camouflage.

IRITANI: My wife [Joanne] was in Poston, and she remembers going out one day to pick cotton.

KOBATA: Yes, my sister told me that they did that, too, when I was there. They picked cotton to raise money for the school.

IRITANI: Right now, it's part of the Colorado River Indian Reservation, so to speak.

At that time, did you see Indians around there?

KOBATA: Yes, I think we were under the War Relocation Authority [WRA] but we were also under the Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA] because of the fact that it was an Indian Reservation.

IRITANI: Did you see them around the place there?

KOBATA: Yeah. I used to see them on the outskirts there. You know, a lot of them then [as I recall now] used to drive the big caterpillars to make the canals.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. How was your family life? According to my wife, the teenagers had a good time there. They had their own clubs, and they ate together, and they did a lot of things together. More so, among their teenage friends rather than eating in a family group.

KOBATA: Yes, because I think the parents really didn't have too much control of the kids, because there was community eating so they pretty much enjoyed themselves, especially the older ones, I would say.

IRITANI: Speaking in Japanese, too, whereas the Nisei spoke mostly English, right?

KOBATA: Right, so my life in Camp was pretty short-lived, although I recall all the important incidents.

IRITANI: Well, health-wise, they didn't have any serious health problems, as far as you know?

KOBATA: The only thing was, I sure hated the water initially, because there was alkaline, a mineral-thick water. It was hard to drink it, but of course that was the only way you could survive, so you learned to drink it.

IRITANI: Do you remember Christmas in Camp?

KOBATA: I was never in Camp at Christmas time.

IRITANI: Well, I suppose Christmas didn't mean too much for those in the Buddhist Church?

KOBATA: I really couldn't say, because at Christmas time, I was outside of Camp, and I came back just about after Christmas. Then, I went out before the following year.

IRITANI: Let's see, how long were you in Poston?

KOBATA: Well, uh, two months and -- maybe not quite six months, all told.

IRITANI: You mean you were? But your family was there longer?

KOBATA: Yes. In 1944, during the war years, I got established at my relation's farm, so I called my parents out. So, they did not stay in Camp during the latter part of the war [World War II] years.

IRITANI: After the people were put into the Camps, this Questionnaire came out. Do you remember where if you answered "Yes, Yes", you were okay, but if it was "No, No", they went you out of the Camp?

KOBATA: Yes, I remember when I came back in, the Winter of '42 [1942] or Spring of '43 [1943], that Questionnaire did come out at that time.

IRITANI: And did it create quite a bit of confusion in Camp?

KOBATA: Yes, it did. Especially among the different groups: the pros and cons and in-between groups.

IRITANI: That led to violence in some places where some of the leaders of different groups?

KOBATA: Well, most of the people from Block 229 were policemen, so they were to re-enforce the guard - whatever side.

IRITANI: Well, I imagine JACL [Japanese American Citizens League] had a lot to do with having good relations with the WRA [War Relocation Authority] and the United States Government. Do you remember how they were treated by the JACL leaders.

KOBATA: Our Block had mostly policemen, so they were the ones that guarded Saburo Kido [a JACL leader].

IRITANI: Oh, Kido, yes. Was he the National Director [JACL] at the time or later. But he was the leader?

KOBATA: Yes. I remember that a group from our Block [the policemen] guarded him.

IRITANI: Was he beaten up? Do you recall?

KOBATA: I don't know if he got beaten up or if he was about to get beaten up.

IRITANI: Were there some who answered "No - No" who were sent to Tule Lake [Internment Camp]. That was a Separation [Segregation?] Camp.

KOBATA: I wasn't there at the separation time, but I was there when the Questionnaire came out.

IRITANI: Did you know of people who answered "No - No"?

KOBATA: If "No - No" were good friends, and I actually don't know. As for myself, some of my good friends had volunteered for the service [military] when they were seventeen or eighteen years old. I don't know how they got in when they were seventeen [years old], but anyhow, they volunteered at that time. I felt, besides, I didn't feel any alliance to Japan because I had never been there and had never been educated there, so my answers were always positive.

IRITANI: I think at that time, they were organizing the Nisei group, the 442nd RCT [Regimental Combat Team]. I think they were able to volunteer. Did some of your friends volunteer for that?

KOBATA: Yes, one of my real good friends, Sus Satow. There were others, but Sus is the only one I can recall.

IRITANI: So he went to Military Intelligence Service [MIS]?

KOBATA: No, he went to Europe with the 442nd.

IRITANI: I don't recall exactly when Poston [Internment] Camp was closed up. There came a time when they started gradually making preparations to close up Camp. Do you remember any of that?

KOBATA: The Camp finally closed at the end of 1945.

IRITANI: What preparations did your family make?

KOBATA: They were already out of Camp. I already had them in Ontario, Oregon in 1944-1945. They were with me.

IRITANI: Were your parents, your brother, and sisters there?

KOBATA: Well, my two older sisters were back East already.

IRITANI: So where were they living?

KOBATA: My oldest sister was in Ann Arbor [Michigan]. I guess she worked at the Michigan University Hospital as a Nurse's Aide. My other sister was in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

IRITANI: What was the name of your sister in Ann Arbor?

KOBATA: Yoneko.

IRITANI: And, how old was she at that time?

KOBATA: Let's see, she is five years older than me, I mean seven years older than me.

IRITANI: And the other sister in Milwaukee. What was her name?

KOBATA: She is three-and-a-half years older than me.

IRITANI: What was she doing in Milwaukee?

KOBATA: I think she first went out to do domestic work. I don't think she went out to do any manufacturing work.

IRITANI: Did you hear about a Nisei relocation group composed of Friends Service People, and others who helped the Nisei get out of Camp and to enroll in colleges back East? Did you hear about that program?

KOBATA: I heard about it after I came back to Camp.

IRITANI: Did your sisters take advantage of the program or get help at that time?

KOBATA: My older sisters were already out of school for some time. My brother was younger than me, and was still going to school in Camp, and also went to school in Ontario, Oregon. If anyone, it would've been me, I guess, but I didn't know about the program.

IRITANI: There were quite a few that took advantage of it and went on to college.

KOBATA: Yes, those were the people who went to high school and graduated in Poston.

IRITANI: Yes, to continue their higher education.

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Now, you got the family out of Camp, and they were relocated in Ontario, Oregon. Were there quite a few Japanese families there?

KOBATA: Well, Ontario, Oregon had a Japanese community prior to the War. They had a Japanese Community Hall there. It was right next to the Ontario Airport. So during the war, the Navy used the airport for flight training. I guess today, it would be aircraft for aircraft carrier. They were leasing the Japanese Community Hall to use as a dormitory.

IRITANI: So, most of the Japanese went into farming? I think they grow a lot of onions there.

KOBATA: Yes, the farm I ended up on - the Okita Farm - raised onions, lettuce, potato, and celery, but no sugar beets. I'm glad of that [laughter]. They were doing quite well. My job, since they thought I had a lot of patience, as young as I was, they wanted me to be an irrigator.

IRITANI: So you were of High School age?

KOBATA: You know, a lot of kids around my age, at that time, didn't continue on with their school. I know quite a few of them that didn't. So I guess I was one of the few that came back, went to Night School, and received a diploma. I can't recall the other people doing that. I mean there were some that did.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Session 1, June 28, 1996]

[Session 2, July 2, 1996]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

IRITANI: We are continuing our oral history with Mr. Ted Kobata.

Ted, would you resume with your relocation Poston [Internment Camp] to Ontario, Oregon. How did that come about?

KOBATA: It came about, I realized, through my folks that I had a distant relation in Ontario, Oregon. The Fukuda family had seven daughters and the third was married to Jim Okita. Jim Okita's brother was farming there from probably prior to World War II. So, through that connection, I went to work on the Okita farm.

IRITANI: What was the date? Do you recall?

KOBATA: Yes, it was probably in November of 1943.

IRITANI: And you were able to relocate the whole family?

KOBATA: But the good things didn't come about until May of 1944.

IRITANI: What happened in May of 1944?

KOBATA: That's when I started working from about the early part of 1944 so that they could relocate to Ontario, Oregon. So, during that time, they did all the paperwork and made their plans and I sponsored them so they could come out to Ontario, Oregon. I believe the school wasn't quite out yet as they was the end of May.

IRITANI: Under what conditions were you able to leave Camp? Were there some restrictions or regulations that you had to follow?

KOBATA: Yes, there were restrictions. You had to have a sponsor or a place of work, or someone who would be responsible for you on the "outside" other than the Camp. And, of course, you could never return to what they called Military Area Number One which was along the West Coast and the Southern part of Arizona.

IRITANI: So, what did the family do? Farming or helping the farmer?

KOBATA: Of course, I was responsible for them, so they didn't have to have any work to get out of Camp, since I was the responsible person for their well-being. Initially, when they first got out, my Dad and the family worked on thinning sugar beets, but that was back-breaking work. Besides, the family hadn't done any physical work for a couple of years.

IRITANI: Were there other families that left Camp to relocate to Ontario?

KOBATA: Yes, there were a lot of farmers; however, families from Mayhew [California] went to Colorado. The Satow family outside of the family and his side of the family went to Colorado. Another good friend of ours went to Denver [Colorado] to start a laundry. My parents were asked if they would want to go to the Denver area, but my folks said since I was already in Ontario, Oregon, that they preferred to come join me where I was. Of course, maybe I was prejudiced, but then the farming portion I think the labor value, and more fertile soil and, of course, the weather condition was much more ideal for farming.

IRITANI: How was the community there, especially the Caucasian community? Did you experience some anti-Asian or anti-Japanese feelings?

KOBATA: Ontario was one of the unusual towns at that time, I would say, because there used to be a Japanese community there before the War. Not only that, they received the Nikkei family very well, so there were no "No Japs" signs as such, displayed on the windows, except for one place -- a Chop Suey House. I could well understand.

IRITANI: A Chinese place?

KOBATA: Yes, but all the other places of business welcomed our trade, and they were real friendly to us. I think maybe it was because of the racial make up of the community there. There were people of German ancestry and of course, the Mormon people treated us pretty well because we initially went out on a Mormon-owned sugar beets factory.

IRITANI: So, how did your family feel about getting out of Camp after being locked up for a couple of years. Was it a big relief or was there quite an adjustment again?

KOBATA: Well, everything in a coincidental way happened in our favor. Not too far from us lived one of the families that used to live in Mayhew. They were just around the curve of the highway.

IRITANI: So now exactly what kind of work were you doing? You mentioned sugar beet work, but you didn't stay in that very long, did you?

KOBATA: No, on this particular farm, they were row-croppers specializing in raising lettuce, onions, potatoes, and celery. So, it was not as back-breaking as stoop labor, and not as back-breaking as sugar beet work was. Of course, I was assigned to do irrigation work.

IRITANI: Were there organizations there that you took part in? Churches, athletic leagues or that sort?

KOBATA: Well, at that time, there were no organized athletic leagues. However, there was a bowling alley in Ontario, and of course, some weekends we would play softball. Mostly, we were, I guess, work-conditioned. As far as church, I believe there was a Methodist Church that was started in Ontario, Oregon. Mr. Abe and his daughter, Amy went to church occasionally, so once in a while, they would pick me up, and so I have attended the Methodist Church there in Ontario.

IRITANI: Was a Buddhist Church there too?

KOBATA: I don't recall a Buddhist Church. There might have been, but I can't recall.

IRITANI: Now, at about this time, were you thinking about getting married?

KOBATA: Well, I wasn't thinking about marriage because it was more or less survival of the family and survival of myself as far as trying to find a place to really establish ourselves.

IRITANI: Your wife's family - where did they relocate?

KOBATA: Their family stayed in Camp, except for my brother-in-law, Masami [Iwasa]. He did go out to do sugar beet farming and seasonal work but after that

IRITANI: You mean you went out together?

KOBATA: We went out at the same time but we weren't in the same group.

IRITANI: Was this in Ontario or Idaho or where?

KOBATA: Okay, that was when we went out in 1943. It was to Caldwell, Idaho.

IRITANI: So, when did you leave Ontario? From Ontario, you left to return to California?

KOBATA: Yes, we heard through the record that the War was going quite favorably, and not only that, but this time, a lot of the Nisei soldiers were getting killed in Europe. So I guess, at this period, the Government felt justified in saying that the West Coast would be opened for our re-entry back into the home area.

IRITANI: So you had property back in the Florin [California] area, so you wanted to get back as soon as possible?

KOBATA: Yes, we were already relocated, so it wasn't too difficult to just leave that particular area and come back to Sacramento [California]. Of course, we call our area Mayhew, about seven-to-eight miles from Florin.

IRITANI: Well, you didn't have much equipment or property or furniture from Ontario to bring with you to California.

KOBATA: Well, we just brought back the bare necessities, like our refrigerator and our washing machine. Of course, when we relocated to Ontario, Oregon, our furniture wasn't the best anyhow, except for our bare minimum use, so it wasn't too difficult to bring back what we had.

IRITANI: Your sisters or brother -- were they in school in Ontario?

KOBATA: No, this was in the latter part of February, so it was decided at that time that I would come back, my mother could come back, and my father and my younger sister and my older sister would remain there until school was out.

KOBATA: However, my mother became ill about that time, so the whole family decided to "pull up stakes" and come back to Sacramento.

IRITANI: Let's see. Jim and your sisters were going to school there, were they?

KOBATA: Yes. Yoshiko was below me, and Gladys was the youngest.

IRITANI: Gladys was in High School?

KOBATA: No, she was in Grammar School. Yoshiko had an unusual graduation. She was in the Ontario class book as a graduate there, and then when she came back to Sacramento, she had been to Sacramento High School, so she had her picture in Sacramento High School graduates.

IRITANI: Now, we're back in Mayhew here, in Sacramento. What was the condition of your property when you came back? Was there a house waiting for you, or did you have to look around?

KOBATA: Well, our situation was this: Prior to 1942, before Evacuation, and back in 1941, when my sister became twenty-one years old, my Dad, in her name, went to start purchasing our property, so on our property we had an irrigation system that was very little developed prior to that because we had purchased virgin area which was just a rough pasture area. Since we had the water system, it was easy to start, but we had no home or barn or nothing of any building.

IRITANI: I think you had mentioned storing your pump. You got that out?

KOBATA: Yeah, we just took the motor part of the pump when we left for Camp, and we had stored it over at Jim Fairbairn's place. So when we came back, we got the pump and we put the motor portion back on. I guess, at that time, PGE Company [Pacific Gas and Electric Company] turned on the power, and so we had pumped for water.

IRITANI: It was powered by electricity?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: So that was about twenty acres that was acquired in your sister's name?

KOBATA: Yes, that was twenty-three acres.

IRITANI: You started grapes or strawberries?

KOBATA: This also has an interesting history. When we were in Ontario, Oregon, my Dad was working at a tofu place, and it was his responsibility to make age. There was this insurance person from Salt Lake City [Utah] who occasionally stopped by at the tofu place, and my Dad got to know him. So my Dad asked him if he knew Kasuga Nursery, and he said he did. So through this connection, we were able to order Twentieth-Century ever-bearing plants.

IRITANI: Strawberries?

KOBATA: Yes, we got the strawberry plants through the Nursery. So as soon as we got back to California, we ordered the Twentieth-Century plant. Therefore, if you know the history of the Twentieth-Century strawberry, or ever-berries, as soon as you plant it, it would bloom and produce berries. Then as soon as the runners come out, they would also bloom and then there were berries. So it was a strawberry that was made for the occasion for us to create work plus great income.

IRITANI: Were the other farmers in the area raising the same kind of ever-bearing strawberries?

KOBATA: I think it was unique in the way that we were the first people to do this because, I think if we got too late into the summer, it was hard for the plants to grow.

IRITANI: Were there other varieties?

KOBATA: It was easy to transplant strawberries in the dormant stage.

IRITANI: But there were other varieties so that people had other varieties?

KOBATA: Yes.

IRITANI: So, the Kobata family was one of the first to start with the ever-bearing variety.

KOBATA: Yes, one of the few families.

IRITANI: The strawberry season is usually when the fruit is bearing, from what month to what month?

KOBATA: Usually, the variety that we had before the War -- the Oregon Plum -- of course, the Twentieth-Century just was introduced prior the War, so the main strawberry variety was the Oregon Plum before the War which would produce mainly in April and May. Then, we would get little bit of berries during the summertime, but very little. Whereas, with the Twentieth-Century ever-bearing, it starts from April all the way to the frost-time.

IRITANI: The Oregon Plum was one variety, and this ever-bearing was another variety.

KOBATA: Yes, about the time when we came back, there was what they called the University variety, which was a kind of hybrid, namely Shasta and Lassen but the Shasta variety was the more marketable type of berry.

IRITANI: So, I guess it depends on the weather, but the berry-growing season when you began harvesting, started in May or June?

KOBATA: Usually, from about the first part of April.

IRITANI: Oh, that's early. Did it last all summer?

KOBATA: Well, the Twentieth-Century did, and the Shasta did have first crop April, May, June, and when the weather gets so warm, it doesn't produce as well.

IRITANI: Did you have a special Kobata brand for the ever-bearing?

KOBATA: No, [pause] Twentieth-Century or who propagated the plant.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Did you feel that the Japanese had better strawberries than anybody else?

KOBATA: Well, I suppose they did by working hard to raise better crop.

IRITANI: They had a reputation, didn't they?

KOBATA: They might have, but the Japanese had a [pause] I guess it was the type of work that the other people didn't really enjoy getting into, which was a kind of back-breaking work.

IRITANI: Yes, labor-intensive.

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: What other crops -- grapes were pretty well cultivated in this area, too, right?

KOBATA: Yes, we resumed the same type of culture that we did before the War. That was to plant strawberries, and then at the same time plant the grapes. The grapes would be planted in nine-by-nine squares. So, after picking the strawberries for three years, the grape vines would have grown to where they would be productive. By the fourth year, the grapes would produce somewhat.

IRITANI: Were the grapes harvested at the same time as strawberries or at different times of the year?

KOBATA: Well, for the first couple of years, grapes doesn't bear any fruit.

IRITANI: Then, after the grapes start bearing fruit, do you take out the strawberries?

KOBATA: That's right.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. So, grapes are better cash crops and easier since there's no stoop labor.

KOBATA: Right, and then the grapes' life-span is much greater. It could be maybe twenty-five to thirty years.

IRITANI: What variety of grapes did you plant?

KOBATA: Well, most of us raised different varieties. We had Muscats and Ribiers for the market and the Tokays usually for shipping.

IRITANI: Those are table grapes, right?

KOBATA: Right, and then we raised very few wine-type grapes.

IRITANI: How did you handle the fertilizing? Did you use commercial fertilizer or horse manure or chicken manure?

KOBATA: For the strawberries, in preparing the ground, we used chicken manure a lot, and plow in that soil before we planted the strawberries. Of course, once it's in production, we used commercial fertilizer. Sometimes, we would use the liquid type and sometimes we used the pellet type.

IRITANI: Did you have to spray for insect control?

KOBATA: Yes, we had to. With the strawberries, they seemed to be susceptible to a lot of insects. We would spray for the particular type of insect, but they would become immune to it, so we needed to apply a stronger type of spray to kill the ones that survive because when you kill off the weak ones, then the stronger ones survive, and then take another type of chemical to kill them.

IRITANI: Did the strawberries need more water than grapes?

KOBATA: Yes. I would say that strawberries probably had to be irrigated more frequently because of their shallow roots, whereas the grapes have deeper root systems.

IRITANI: As far as special equipment is concerned, didn't grapes require more equipment such as tractors, etc.?

KOBATA: Well, whatever ground preparation was done by plowing and discing, for grapes, use same type of equipment. Of course, when it comes to cultivating the strawberries, then the equipment would be different. Some of us had single-wheeled garden tractors to get in the rows easier and there was a lot

KOBATA: of weed hoeing. However, with the different weed control, it lessened the time spent manually hoeing the weeds.

IRITANI: You had to have extra laborers during harvesting of strawberries since it's picked by hand, right?

KOBATA: Right, I used to hire Japanese, Filipinos, and Mexicans at the same time.

IRITANI: How about grape harvesting - the same thing?

KOBATA: Well, with the type of operation that we had, it was family harvested.

IRITANI: Now, the marketing, was it co-op for both grapes and the strawberries, or did you market the crops?

KOBATA: Well, for the local market, we had the produce people come and pick it up, and then - I guess he was a broker - so he would sell it for us. And, of course, for the strawberries, we also initially had a broker, and he was in the marketing. However, in 1953, we incorporated and hired some people that needed to be the brokers for us to operate our operation.

IRITANI: Were there any special problems in growing strawberries or grapes, or were they about the same? You say you liked the grapes as they brought in more revenue.

KOBATA: Well, I guess the strawberries brought in greater

[End Tape 2, Side B]

[Begin Tape 3, Side A]

IRITANI: interview of Mr. Ted Kobata. This is Tape 3. Let's see, you didn't stay in the grapes and strawberry business too long. When did you go into the construction business?

KOBATA: Well, the family continued in a limited way.

IRITANI: Continued what -- the strawberries and grapes?

KOBATA: Right. However, with the turn of events, the property we already purchased prior to World War II, with the expansion of Mather Field, bringing in the B-52, they needed a longer runway. Therefore, our property was right on the expansion area, so from about 1955, the Federal Real Estate Division started negotiating with us to purchase our land for expansion. Of course, if there is anything to do with the Federal Government, there's a lot of paperwork, and it takes a long time for the negotiation. In the meantime, I felt that the thing I knew best was to go into building construction because of the knowledge that I had in that area, and so that was the reason for my going into construction.

IRITANI: Well, I think on your form here, you mentioned having taken some courses on blueprinting and construction and so forth. Is that right?

KOBATA: Yes, that was right after we came back to California. During the evenings, especially in the winter months, there was very little to do. Therefore, I signed up for different courses on the Evening Education.

IRITANI: At that time, did you feel that you'd really like to get into construction work, or did you have some experience working for somebody else during the wintertime, too?

KOBATA: It seemed like everything, unknowingly, was working towards what I ended up with. For instance, taking up blueprint reading and becoming fairly knowledgeable in building construction, and then I took a course in electricity, not in much depth, but I had a little knowledge in that area. So everything that I did was kind of preparing me to get into construction, not that I was thinking about going into construction in earlier days.

IRITANI: Did you work for another outfit to get the experience?

KOBATA: Yes, I initially started in the latter part of 1955 to 1956. I went to work for Tom Kamada, a general building contractor. At that time, he was one of the contractors who was building a lot of custom homes. Since I was quite skillful in driving a tractor and doing leveling, he had me do site preparation. So every time there was a house to be built, there was always a lot of site preparation to be done. That was the primary work that he had me do. After that, I helped the carpenters. Besides, I had the tractor and the truck to haul the equipment to do the leveling work.

IRITANI: Well, now that you mentioned the year of 1955 as the year you started with Tom Kamada, I believe that you got married a few years before that, in 1951.

KOBATA: Correct.

IRITANI: Where did you get married?

KOBATA: We got married in Sacramento. We'd been neighbors ever since the 1930's -- the Iwasa family.

IRITANI: How many were in the Iwasa family?

KOBATA: There were six -- three girls and three boys. My wife was Number Four in the family.

IRITANI: You were neighbors before the War, also?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Then, they must have come back by 1951 and relocated back here. Your wife is a little younger than you?

KOBATA: No, only by about a month.

IRITANI: Oh, you're about the same age. Did you have a nice wedding? Where did you have the wedding -- in church?

KOBATA: Yes, I guess most people had the same type of wedding with a reception following. We were married at the original Mayhew Church. Most people were borrowing other churches and getting married, but I felt that it was more meaningful for me to get married at the Mayhew Church, and the accommodation was limited.

IRITANI: Was Frances helping out on the farm, or did she have a job downtown?

KOBATA: Oh, she was working for the State [of California].

IRITANI: Which Department?

KOBATA: The Employment Department. I think they call it the Human Resources [Department] now. She worked until the second child was born.

IRITANI: Well, we'll just stay with your marriage awhile. You have three children [Glenn Hiroshi born May 22, 1954; Hannah Eiko born May 16, 1956; Stanley Jiro born September 16, 1958]. How did Frances feel about your going into the construction business, for example?

KOBATA: Well, going back to the children, they're all two years apart. I guess it was fate, my going into construction, because of the Federal Government buying out land for expansion of the airstrip.

IRITANI: So you made a little money on that?

KOBATA: Well, not really. The government wants to make sure you don't get rich on it!

IRITANI: Yeah, sure. So how many acres did you lose -- all of it?

KOBATA: We lost that particular twenty-three acres, but I had purchased another parcel in 1945 across a little ways, so we had two properties, and so we moved to the property that wasn't affected by the expansion.

IRITANI: I see. Where did you live after you got married? Did you build a house nearby or ?

KOBATA: I guess it in 1947 or 1948, we bought a mess hall from Camp Beale [located near Marysville, California], you know one of the surplus deals.

IRITANI: Yeah, yeah.

KOBATA: And then, I just added to it, and that was the start of my permanent home [laughter]. That's where my sister Yoshiko, lives and it's a bigger house right now.

IRITANI: Oh, that was moved out from Camp Beale?

KOBATA: Well, the material was, so that's why it has all those square-paned windows.

IRITANI: Oh, I didn't notice that, but it's still standing there. It's a pretty good house, huh?

KOBATA: It's quite stout.

IRITANI: So, you lived there after you got married and raised your family?

KOBATA: Well, in 1957, I built this house.

IRITANI: What's the address here -- Faberge'? 1600 Faberge', is it?

KOBATA: 3600 Faberge'.

IRITANI: Oh, 3600 Faberge'. Did you build this house here?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: When? What year was that?

KOBATA: In 1958.

IRITANI: So your three children were all born here?

KOBATA: The youngest one was born here.

IRITANI: So this here house is -- how old -- thirty years old?

KOBATA: Yeah, I guess so. It should be 1957.

IRITANI: You have a lot of land there where you have your sheds and equipment.
This was a pretty nice house when it was first built it.

KOBATA: Right. I bought twenty acres here, and then built the house and the shop. So this was what we called Our address was 3600 Mayhew Road. So when the developer developed for sub-division and put the street in, we got the Faberge' Street in front of us. What I did was I sold a little over nineteen acres and kept the balance of a little less than one acre.

IRITANI: So, after you moved in here, you really continued on with the construction?

KOBATA: That's right. The people that I sold the ground to, Martin C. Wunderlich had a son-in-law, and the son-in-law's partner had the Rosemont Development Company. So Martin C. Wunderlich purchased the land, but he handed it over to the developer to build on. At that time, Mr. Wunderlich thought that I was a farmer because everytime he saw me, I was always irrigating -- irrigating the strawberries or the tomatoes. And I told him, "No, I'm going to go work for a contractor to do construction work." At that point, he asked why didn't I go to work for his son-in-law and partner. So, that's how I came to work for the Rosemont Development Company.

IRITANI: Rosemont Development Company.

KOBATA: Yes, and then at the time I was to sell the property to Mr. Wunderlich, there was a gentleman's agreement that no Japanese could live in the subdivision.

IRITANI: Oh, is that so?

KOBATA: I told him, "I'm selling this particular property to you, " and "What's going to happen to me -- am I going to be chased out? "No, no, no, no," he said. He told me I was different. Then, he started to tell me that he had a place near Palo Alto, [California] and that his wife's best friend was a flower arrangement teacher, and so he was telling me about those things.

IRITANI: Well, I think some places call it restrictive covenance where you couldn't rent out to -- was it just to Japanese or to minorities in general?

KOBATA: Yes, at that time, when they started to develop into housing, the Federal money was going to come in. Then, they started to kind of not have it written, but it was a kind of gentleman's agreement among the developers in certain areas. Then you could not even to buy into the area.

IRITANI: Which means Asians and Blacks?

KOBATA: Yes.

IRITANI: Well, I imagine in time that was eliminated or phased out.

KOBATA: Yes, it was about that time that it was breaking down. The Blacks were

IRITANI: I think it was in the late fifties that the civil rights movement was going on. Well, now you're in the construction business. You're pretty happy in it? You're working for Rosemont. What kind of work did you do?

KOBATA: Well, initially, they had to get me into the Union in order to work as a carpenter for them. Of course, that was a period where Nikkeis weren't really welcomed into the Union, but it was also breaking down at about that time, too. Anyhow, they got me into the Union, and so I was able to work for them.

IRITANI: Were there other Nikkeis in the Union, or were you the first one?

KOBATA: You mean into the Union? I'm not sure whether I was the first one, but I was one of the earlier ones.

IRITANI: This is the Carpenters' Union?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: At the same time you were working, did you take some classes -- blueprinting or?

KOBATA: Well, at that time, I had always wanted to learn the book end of the construction business, so I joined the apprenticeship course.

IRITANI: What was this now -- high school education, Cal State [California State University Sacramento] or City College [Sacramento]?

KOBATA: The apprenticeship course was held at Sacramento City College.

IRITANI: Then you had to go during the evenings?

KOBATA: Yeah, this was an evening course, so I worked in the daytime. This was learning the book end of the construction business. I guess I didn't have to go, but it was kind of a self-improvement.

IRITANI: Yeah, sure, sure. What other classes did you take?

KOBATA: Well, then I realized at this point I was getting kind of interested in contracting, and I was thinking maybe I should go into contracting, so I did take courses at Heald [Business] College in business law and building code.

IRITANI: There were what -- a semester -- or three to four months at a time?

KOBATA: Yeah, I don't remember if it was three or four months.

IRITANI: Heald [Business] College was sort of private. You had to pay quite a bit of tuition, did you no?

KOBATA: Right, right. It was private. But this was for preparing for the contracting license.

IRITANI: How long did you work for Rosemont?

KOBATA: I believe it was about five-and-a-half years.

IRITANI: Then what happened?

KOBATA: Those development companies, they did a lot of hiring and firing, you know. As soon as, what they called two paychecks, you know, on Friday. If you got two paychecks, that meant 'good bye'. [laughter]

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: A lot of that would happen, but this guy Bob Armstrong, he took a liking to me, and he assigned me to a lot of different kinds of work that was more challenging, like, for instance, laying out the site for the trench digger to dig where the house was going to be. When the street is straight, it's easy, but when you get into a cul-de-sac, then you have to do some pavement because they had to have it five feet from the property and set back.

IRITANI: Yeah, a lot of curves in there.

KOBATA: Yeah, so that's why it kind of interesting to do the markings for the trench digger.

IRITANI: What development or projects were you involved in around town here?

KOBATA: Well, at that time, Aerojet

IRITANI: Where? Oh, Aerojet, yeah.

KOBATA: The Space Program was going strong, and so that's how it came about that they wanted to buy my property, too. So, even when we were building the homes, the Rosemont Development Company wanted to build two houses a day, but they got to where they were seven a week.

IRITANI: These are homes?

KOBATA: Right. The homes were coming up like mushrooms. And then they also built apartment houses, so I got into that. Then they built a shopping center in the area. But the greatest work was done in residential homes.

IRITANI: Well, eventually you left the paychecks from Rosemont, didn't you?

KOBATA: Yeah, there was always a sequence of building twenty or forty homes, and then when we got done until the next set of buildings started, there was a period of up to three weeks of no work.

IRITANI: Yeah, oh, I see.

KOBATA: Well, I got to know these people from Oklahoma and Arkansas, and they had a lot of brothers and brother-in-laws. We would always go to another project through them, because they kinda' took a liking to me.

IRITANI: While you were still working for Rosemont?

KOBATA: Yeah, in between times.

IRITANI: In between. Yeah, okay.

KOBATA: So we would do this. And then, of course, like I was telling you, I was preparing for my contractor's license. At about that time, after working for them about five-and-a-half to six years, the Space Program started cutting back. Therefore, the employees at Aerojet, about 20,000 cut back to about maybe 4,600. So Rancho Cordova [California] became a blight area. Not only that, but there was no need for homes. By this time, I worked for

KOBATA: people that wanted doors fixed or maybe wanted an addition built on, so I was doing this in my spare time.

IRITANI: Well, you had to get a license, too, before you could do that, right?

KOBATA: While I was still working for Rosemont, I had gotten my contractor's license. So everything fell into place, unknowingly doing the right thing, so I'm sure it turned out right.

IRITANI: So your general building contractor's license -- yeah, it says so right there.

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: When did you get that license -- do you know what year?

KOBATA: In 1963 -- I think March 28th of 1963.

IRITANI: And gradually, you took on more jobs and bigger jobs?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Okay, so as you went out on your own, I imagine you had to buy equipment. Did you negotiate a lot of loans to buy equipment?

KOBATA: Well, I still had the farm but not farming too much, so I had the equipment to do site preparation, like a tractor for leveling the ground.

IRITANI: Oh, that you used on the farm?

KOBATA: Yeah, so that equipment I had and the truck which were the two most expensive items. Then, of course, when I built my house, I bought equipment like the, uh, radial arm saw and the table saw. So it wasn't really difficult to buy additional equipment because I had the basic equipment.

IRITANI: What was your first big project - you had several didn't you?

KOBATA: I think the first large one I had was for a produce man. He bought a house and was about to move in. About three days before moving in -- uh, fire Elder Cecchetini owned Chick's Produce. As I mentioned, three days before they were to move in, it caught on fire and burned down.

IRITANI: Is this a produce house?

KOBATA: No, this is a produce man's house -- the owner of the produce business -- his home.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: So, his house burned to almost eighty percent but he wanted to keep the home and fix it and rebuild it. I think it would have been much cheaper to have bulldozed it over and to start anew.

[Phone rings. Recorder is turned off, then power turned back on.]

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Where is the house located?

KOBATA: It's on Jackson Road near Excelsior.

IRITANI: Oh. Is it a big house?

KOBATA: Yeah, a very big house. Then, of course, by doing this, they made the house a little larger with the garage built separately.

IRITANI: So you got the bid, so to speak, to rebuild it?

KOBATA: Yeah, I don't know how it came about that he had confidence in me to do it. I guess prior to that I had done some remodeling of his produce company's office -- I had done some work there, and so maybe it was through that contact that I

IRITANI: Well, how big a budget was this Cecchetini house -- three or four hundred thousand?

KOBATA: Gee, at that time, I think it was about \$28,000.00. It was probably cheaper to have built a new house, but he wanted to rebuild it. Gee, you know, a job like that usually takes quite long because first you have to do the demolition part, and then you have to save a lot of the existing area, so that makes it even harder. I believe it probably took me about four months. At that point, I had to hire carpenters because it took more than just myself and an occasional assistant.

IRITANI: Did you handle the permits and inspection and everything?

KOBATA: Right, and all the sub-contracting.

IRITANI: Then when was the next big project?

KOBATA: Since Mr. Cecchetini knew a lot of produce farmers, the Nikkei farmers took his advice, and they started to, uh offer to build their home.

IRITANI: Give you referrals?

KOBATA: Yeah, to build their homes. At about that time, after most of the initial impact of getting back here and starting out, most of the farmers were pretty well-established and had been making pretty good income

IRITANI: So they wanted to build their own homes?

KOBATA: Yeah, so they wanted to move into a second-phase home -- more permanent than the shack-home they lived in.

IRITANI: So who are some of homes you built for?

KOBATA: For instance, the Ishimoto family here -- Sam and Bob Ishimoto. Their farm here was purchased by the freeway, so they purchased an eighty-acre property on River Road to Woodland. At that time, there was no Interstate Five from Broadway. I guess now that's incorporated into West Sacramento. At that time, for Sam Ishimoto I built a big house for them which was a thirty-degree angle home. I think that was about \$42,000.00. At the same time, I built a concrete block workers' quarter for the seasonal help. Well, their workers were more or less seasonal.

IRITANI: He was a big farmer?

KOBATA: Yes. He was a big truck farmer. So I built a big concrete block quarter for the seasonal workers where they could, I think, so they could wash it down. Then on the same property, I built a house for his brother and his mother. So I built three different buildings right on that one property.

IRITANI: Oh, for the Ishimoto family? What was the other brother's name?

KOBATA: Bob, but they're all gone now.

IRITANI: So the kids are still living there?

KOBATA: Yeah, I think the daughter is still living in the home.

IRITANI: Other big projects were the Baptist Church and the Gedatsu Church and the Poston [Internment Camp] Monument. Which comes next here now?

KOBATA: I built a house for Harold Blomberg. He was the owner of the Blomberg Window Systems.

IRITANI: You built a home for him?

KOBATA: Yeah. I gave him a price, but he wanted to do it time and material because his house was another unique house. He wanted to do a brand new house that used solar and used the earth's temperature. So we had a different type of foundation for his house. It had rocks with concrete blocks turned sideways in the sub-floor area to have the air circulate to use the earth's temperature [that would be around sixty-four to sixty-six degrees]. So during the summer, he would use that cool air to circulate around his house,

KOBATA: and during the winter, he would have this solar -- what they called a garden roof. He would have this room heated up, and then he would transfer that heat into the rest of his house. But economically, it takes maybe thirty to forty years to recoup your investment. It's all there, but then it's not for normal people that can afford it.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: It was an interesting project.

IRITANI: Yeah, it sounds like a different house there. So what year was that -- the Blomberg house?

KOBATA: This was around 1980. All these larger projects happened about that time.

IRITANI: Well, the Baptist Church, now

KOBATA: That was built in different sequences.

IRITANI: Oh, different stages. Yeah, okay. When did you first start on that?

KOBATA: Well, that's going back into the, gee, I guess around 1954, probably. That was before I went to work as a carpenter.

IRITANI: What did you do there?

KOBATA: We built Riichi Satow Hall. Original Chrone Hall was used for over-flow. Church people hired carpenter Bill Walker. All of us volunteers would help. This happened during winter, so I went there most of the winter helping

KOBATA: him by being his right-hand man. Then we would prepare for the weekend work for the other volunteers who would come on Saturdays. He wouldn't be there Saturdays, so he would tell me what he wanted the volunteers to do. So that was another good learning experience for me.

IRITANI: When was the third stage -- what happened? The Main Chapel -- was that later?

KOBATA: In 1990 [third stage].

IRITANI: Pretty recent then, the Main Chapel -- is that right?

KOBATA: Yes, what you see now, I would say in 1989 -- 1990.

IRITANI: Did you start from scratch -- from blueprints -- from the ground up? Is that an entirely new building?

KOBATA: This was the situation there: The Church Trustees felt that it would be cheaper for them to hire me as Supervisor, and they would get their own bid. I actually supervised the job, but other than that, weekend work or demolition and all that was done by volunteers in order to cut cost. If it had gone through me, naturally I would have to at least charge twelve to fifteen percent because of the insurance I'd be involved in since my liability insurance is regulated by the amount of work I do. That way, they got away from that expense and from a lot of other costs.

IRITANI: You would have hired union labor which is a little higher?

KOBATA: Right, right - so that way

IRITANI: Would you say the Gedatsu Church, uh ?

KOBATA: The Gedatsu church came before that [Mayhew Baptist Church].

IRITANI: Oh, when was that?

KOBATA: It's got to be -- I think it was dedicated in 1983, I believe, so I started two years prior to that, in 1981.

IRITANI: Well, there you started from the ground up, right?

KOBATA: Yeah, that was

IRITANI: Blueprints. You hired the architect, did you?

KOBATA: No, usually the owners hire the architect.

IRITANI: What kind of budget did you have for this Gedatsu Church? That was quite a big project.

KOBATA: Ed Kado, the architect, worked with the Gedatsu Church Committee. When they had their blueprints completed, they gave it to me to estimate what the project would cost them. So I came up with a number. Then they asked me to attend their Building Committee meeting. I attended that particular meeting and told them of the estimate that I came up with -- I think it was \$1,650,000.00. Well, I don't remember if they were surprised or not too surprised, but the Committee Chairman asked Ed Kado what the architect

KOBATA: and engineer estimate was, and he [Ed Kado] said it was awfully close to the estimate I gave them. Therefore, the Committee felt confident to award me the contract to build the church.

IRITANI: You mean you already had the design from the architect?

KOBATA: Right. There was a completed plan I got to bid on.

IRITANI: That's an unusual and interesting design -- the roof and shape of the building. Where did that come from -- from Japan or -- ?

KOBATA: Yeah, I believe the Bishop from Japan worked with Ed Kado. They wanted to incorporate a Japanese architectural flair, plus they wanted to incorporate some part of the pyramid by having triangles. That's why you see triangular portions incorporated into that building.

IRITANI: Well, I don't know too much about the Gedatsu religion or philosophy or thinking. I imagine there are some basic elements incorporated into the design of the building -- do you think?

KOBATA: That I'm not sure of. Okay, I know that the coloring -- for instance, that series of balls that's on top of the building, I don't know if you've noticed that. It's gold, purple and different colors, and that's supposed to represent different races. I know about that because that's what I was told.

IRITANI: What is the ball made of?

KOBATA: It's constructed from metal and covered so we could put ceramic tile to it. So the top gold one is gold ceramic tile from Italy which cost several thousand dollars just for the material. The structure portion is metal, and then it's covered with plastic. On top of that is the ceramic tile. So it's just like preparing for ceramic tile.

IRITANI: So the coloring comes out of the material -- the tile or whatever is used?

KOBATA: Right, right.

IRITANI: So you don't have to repaint it every year or couple of years.

KOBATA: No, no, it's imbedded into the material.

IRITANI: How long did it take from start to finish?

KOBATA: It was two years.

IRITANI: How many workers were involved?

KOBATA: Well, I guess I had as many as twelve employees, I think. I had other works going on at the same time and different stages.

IRITANI: Oh, you had other jobs also.

KOBATA: Of course, I kind of slowed down on the other projects, but then I had other work in progress.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: Initially, when they started, they weren't sure how rapidly they would complete this church because of the funding. They felt that maybe they would do the foundation, and do the framework, and stop there until more funds were available. However, Japan's economy was rather good at that time. This was built by all headquarters money from Japan to finance the structure. There was enough money coming in to keep us going because the fund was always coming in sufficiently, so we were able to continue on until we finished it.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. Did most of the funding come from Japan?

KOBATA: I would say that all the structure funding came from Japan.

IRITANI: But they, uh through the bazaars and donations and so forth, they had enough to keep the Church going, to pay the Minister, and do the maintenance.

KOBATA: I would say that what they gained from the bazaars was to help with the maintenance, because it takes a lot of upkeep to maintain it.

IRITANI: Yeah, it's a lot of property -- ten acres, is there?

KOBATA: They have twenty acres. The cost of the maintenance itself is quite high.

IRITANI: Does the church let out or let other organizations use it for bazaars or picnics or something like that?

KOBATA: Initially, the different ken-jin-kai people started using it was when they'd have their picnics and they'd have it at Land Park [William Land Park] or at Elk Grove Park. Now, with so many inter-marriages, they didn't know who was coming to get the free refreshments, whether they were part of the inter-marriage family or whether it was somebody who was attending the park by themselves, so that's why this became the situation.

IRITANI: Yeah, I notice among the Japanese community that more people of mixed marriages come out to these bazaars rather than to the church services, for example.

[End Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

IRITANI: Side B. Let's go on to your big job -- the Poston [Internment Camp] Monument.

KOBATA: Do you want to talk about some of the equipment that I got for the configuration of the structure? [Gedatsu Church]

IRITANI: Oh, yeah, yeah, okay. Did you have some special equipment or?

KOBATA: Yes, being that the center of the highest point of the interior ceiling was around fifty feet, I had to buy additional scaffolding plus more scaffolding from the rental people. Another thing, in order to get us that high, I bought

KOBATA: what they call a "36-G Scissor Lift" so that it goes up to a forty-two feet working height.

IRITANI: This is a scissors, uh ?

KOBATA: A scissor lift.

IRITANI: Scissor lift, -- yeah, okay.

KOBATA: in order to transport the worker up and down like an elevator in order to get the material up there. Then, with the configuration of the structure, I had to get another scissor lift that could go up to nineteen feet high and to twenty-five feet working height to drive around the lower area. So besides the -- like I mentioned, there was a lot of scaffolding I had to buy and rent, a scissor lift for getting to various heights. It had to be a scissor-type scaffolding equipment because of the different heights. You always had to go up or down to regulate it, according to the area you were working on

IRITANI: Was that available here in the Sacramento area?

KOBATA: So what I did, I figured the job would last a year-and-a-half. What I decided to do was, if I rented it, in twenty months' time, I would have paid for it. Therefore, I made a down payment and made a contract to purchase these equipment. So that's why I did not foresee making money off the job, but by buying the equipment, I had residual access, so that wasn't the only equipment. We had to buy a lot of safety equipment that we never use up to

KOBATA: about two-story work. Usually, when you're up working fifty plus feet, you need to make sure you have a safety harness and a safety belt, and so it was big job.

IRITANI: How high is it from the ground level to the top where the balls are?

KOBATA: I would say that it must be pretty close to sixty feet.

IRITANI: Sixty feet high.

KOBATA: Right. Being that it was an unusual architectural design, it wasn't very easy to construct it according to what it looked like on the plan. We had to improvise different ways to make the curvature. There was a lot of trial and error to duplicate what was on the plan.

IRITANI: To get the curvatures in, you had to make the forms and then ?

KOBATA: Well, we tried bending the plywood in different ways, but that didn't work because the plywood would bend only one way. After trying different ways to get the particular curvature, I said to myself, "You know what's going to work good? A plastic pipe," because the pipe would bend in all directions. So, we tried with a plastic pipe, and we got the configuration. Then we asked the architect if that was about what he would like, and he said "Yes". So we used the plastic pipe curvature as a pattern. From there, it was easy to duplicate all the curvatures because

IRITANI: Yeah, the material was some kind of concrete or?

KOBATA: No, the material what was -- instead of being stucco -- it was a dryvit [synthetic plaster system] type of elastic finish material, but the framework had to be made out of wood and plywood. Then to obtain the curvature, we used the PVC [polyvinyl chloride] pipe.

IRITANI: So, what's the material? You said plywood didn't work. Is it some kind of plastic pipe [PVC] ?

KOBATA: Okay, this was to get the curvature. After we got the curvature, then we could use the plywood to conform to the various areas.

IRITANI: Oh, I see. So, the basic material is plywood?

KOBATA: Yeah, plywood and wood. Of course, the superstructure is concrete and structured steel.

IRITANI: Yeah, that sounds like a tremendous job.

KOBATA: Another unusual thing they did was a cornerstone, I guess you would call it. For the Gedatsu people we dug hole at four corners and one in the center of the building foundation. The stones that were buried were from Japan, Southern California, Fresno, San Francisco and from Sacramento congregation. The people had written characters on the rock [pause]

IRITANI: Oh, this was the cornerstone?

KOBATA: Yeah, they would bury these stones, four corners and one in the center.
So the Bishop told me that the reason was maybe a couple thousand years
from now someone will dig the rocks and read the characters on it or
whatever curiosity!

IRITANI: Did they have a special ceremony or a blessing before the construction
started?

KOBATA: Yeah. they had a groundbreaking ceremony.

IRITANI: Then, when it was finished, did they have a dedication ceremony?

KOBATA: Yeah. the Japan people came here and helped perform the dedication
ceremony.

IRITANI: Oh yeah. You say Marion [Kanemoto], uh I think she has a picture
[Dedication celebration group picture] of this or uh?

KOBATA: I don't think so.

IRITANI: She said she had a picture of this Gedatsu Church.

KOBATA: I don't think she has this one, unless she was quite familiar

IRITANI: Now, this is the dedication ceremony, huh?

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: Yeah, that's tremendous. Okay, well, we'll go on to the Poston project.
How did that start? Was it George Oki or somebody else that first ?

KOBATA: I was looking through some of the booklets, and I understand that we had a Poston II Reunion in Monterey [California] in 1989. At that time, the group recalled that Poston was one of the Camps that didn't have a marker. All of the other Camps had some sort of marker, and Poston didn't have one. At that time, the idea was born that we should do some sort of marker.

IRITANI: Was a commit organized?

KOBATA: Then after that, Camp II [Poston} -- you know, we had a reunion previous to that, a Forty-Year [1982] Reunion in Sacramento. Of course, there was always that committee. When we had this Reunion, I think it was the Forty-Five Year [1987] Reunion at the Sacramento Inn, I had to put up an exhibit there. I had volunteered to build a simulation of a barrack or a portion of a barrack. In order to build it and display it there, I think we only had about an hour or two-and-a-half hours to do this because the room was being used by somebody else, so we had a limited time to put the display. What I did, as to the barracks, I made it in my carport. Anyhow, going back to that period, the committee was already there. I'm pretty sure this committee became the Poston [Internment Camp] Monument Committee.

IRITANI: Who were some of the members of that committee?

KOBATA: Hannah Satow, George Oki, Kiyo Sato-Viacrusis - they were the three co-chairs. May Takeuchi was the secretary. That idea was born in 1989, at the reunion in Monterey. The follow-up had to be with the Colorado River Indian Tribe Administration. In the ensuing year, I think George Oki, Hannah Satow, Betsy Hamakawa, and Osami Doi, and there might've been someone else -- they took a trip to Poston to initially talk to that Administration.

IRITANI: The CRIT [Colorado River Indian Tribe]?

KOBATA: I guess that was primarily just a site seeking and fact finding. In 1991, after communicating with the CRIT people, they sort of required for what the intention was as to the use of the ground, what was going to be built, and how it was going to be maintained. After a few communication, they approved the proposal in 1991. Of course, we had been having our regular monthly meetings by this time.

IRITANI: Here in Sacramento?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: Were there any others -- I mean from [Poston] Camps I and III?

KOBATA: We spearheaded this ourselves, and after it was decided that we would do this, then we contacted the San Diego Camp III.

IRITANI: To help with the funding, huh?

KOBATA: Yeah, the Camp III group so there was a Co-Chair from that area. Then, also from the Los Angeles area, there was a Co-Chair. George Oki, being that he had a big nursery business, he had pretty good contacts. Not only went to high school in Poston, so all the more he was able to make contact. Most people who went to school in Camp had better communication with the out-of-town people. So, anyhow, they gave us support to go ahead. Then mainly we needed financial support, so this all came about - the initial Monument plan I was going to ask my architect friend. Then one day when I was coming from the Walerga [Assembly Center] Memorial near Highway 80 [in Sacramento County], I went to this restaurant to eat where I saw a friend of mine, Hodge Kawakami. Through him, I was doing a lot of University of California, Davis [California] construction work. At that time, I asked Hodge, "By the way, how old were you when you were in Camp?" He said, "About ten years old." I says, "You know what? I was just of doing some research on the marker or a little monument that we're planning on building in Poston." Since he worked for the construction-architectural division for the University in Davis, I said, "Why don't you come up with a plan." So he already

IRITANI: Oh, what was his name?

KOBATA: Hodge Kawakami.

IRITANI: Okay, yeah, all right.

KOBATA: I think he's Reiko's [Kawakami] brother-in-law.

IRITANI: Let me yeah, okay, just continue on. I want to be sure that we're recording [laughter].

KOBATA: Hodge came up with a plan -- the initial plan. We worked on that initially, on how much it would cost, then I came up with the cost. It was a simple plan, I think it was about six feet wide and about six feet high. I figured, well, with that particular plan, I could build that in two sections and haul it on a U-Haul and take it down there [to Poston Internment Camp Site], pour the base and incorporate the

IRITANI: The original idea -- the main idea -- it looks like a tall pole or chimney or

KOBATA: That wasn't the original one. This was more simple -- about six feet wide with a column on each end. The roof portion was -- maybe overall -- maybe it was about thirty inches high, and this plaque on each side. I figured that with this particular design, I could cast it here in two pieces and haul it down there on a U-Haul and pour the base and then incorporate the two units together.

IRITANI: Then how did it happen that you got to this final monument?

KOBATA: Okay, so in the meantime, Ray Takata

IRITANI: Yeah, Ray -- he's the Sacramento fellow?

KOBATA: Yeah, he knew Hodge Kawakami. He also was awarded many architectural work through Hodge of UC Davis [University of California at Davis] jobs -- you know, different construction jobs. So Hodge told Ray, "How about you coming up with a design. Of course, Ray is an architect, and nothing is going to be simple when he gets through with it! So he got together with George Oki, and they came up with this particular design.

IRITANI: Oh, this is sort of like a smokestack.

KOBATA: Yeah, and then, of course, the idea of a Japanese lantern is incorporated there.

IRITANI: Is there any Indian influence at all in there?

KOBATA: No, no, we just proposed everything to get their approval. So once the plan was drawn up, it was all up to me to get this built because I had volunteered to build it. I was completely in charge, other than what the architect drew. Other than that, I was completely in charge.

IRITANI: So what was the entire budget? Did you start with a budget for the entire thing?

KOBATA: I believe we had a budget like about \$75,000.00.

IRITANI: And the main material was poured concrete?

KOBATA: Yeah, poured-in-place concrete. That seemed easy after it was all done, but to make the mold

IRITANI: That was made here in Sacramento?

KOBATA: Yeah. To make the mold wasn't that simple, I found out. It's easier to actually make whatever you're going to do -- make the particular item, but then in order to make the outside mold it not that easily done. So that was another experience for me to really get into detail on how to do it. There was a lot of research on my part, but it was challenging.

IRITANI: How many trips did you make to Poston?

KOBATA: Well, initially, we made a trip down there -- I think that was in September of 1991 -- to see where we were going to build it.

IRITANI: You had to work with CRIT, too?

KOBATA: Yeah, and then we meet them, and of course, you know, an interesting thing happened. This old Indian fellow came by, and he started reminiscing about the time he had moved there. I guess that was in August of 1945, and last year -- that's right -- 1995 was their Fiftieth Anniversary. So I asked Ron

KOBATA: Moore, "Did the Hopi have any celebration?" He said, "No, they kind of kept it quiet" because they're the minority there, and they were imported there, see, so they kind of kept it quiet. But last year was their fiftieth year. Anyhow, going back to this old fellow we met there at [Poston Internment] Camp II, he drove up, and told us that he [Phil Zeoma] from Hopi Reservation, east of here, that when he was in his teens, his family came there to Poston II. He started telling us about the story, and, of course, you know, it was like old neighbors meeting old neighbors because he knew that the Camp was, and where the swimming hole was, where Cottonwood Bowl was. Anyhow, we had a good conversation with him. Later, I asked Ron Moore -- because he was taking us around and getting acquainted -- and he said this man used to be Police Chief, Council member and all that; he's still alive to tell his story, so it was another interesting thing that happened. I believe it was February of that year -- I came back and I told George [Oki] that there are these two areas that they offered us to construct the monument on. So George, I, Frances, Min and Bernice Ouye went down there to select a site. None of the sites proposed to us seemed to be ideal, so after researching that area, there was one area that they offered that was a nice looking area, but then it would be hidden. Not only that, it could easily be vandalized. The site we selected, this place next to the fire station

IRITANI: Yeah, it is on the main highways.

KOBATA: Yeah -- which was a wise choice. Then, we made another trip -- this time with Hannah [Satow] and George [Oki] to take the plan down there to get CRIT's approval. So I made three trips.

IRITANI: I understand that it was hard places to stay down there, so you bought an RV [Recreational Vehicle], did you?

KOBATA: I bought the RV in August of 1991, so I already had the RV. Maybe because I felt that I had volunteered my services to build the Poston Monument, I figured that when I get there, I could work from the RV. So the site was selected. In April [1992], Hannah Satow, George [Oki] and myself went to Poston to take the plan there to get approval of the drawing. Then, on July 6, 1992, Kiyoo Sato-Viacrusis and I took the finalized plan. You know, architecturally and structurally and all the specifications. I took the plan to the Resource - Development Committee [Here in Sacramento, it would be like Planning Commission].

IRITANI: The County, huh?

KOBATA: Well, the CRIT Administration. Just like entity in itself. Then I took the plan to the building department -- what they call Plan check -- they had to check to see if it was structurally sound. The Building and Safety and Code compliance. When we got there, it was July 7th and 8th when we were negotiating to finalize for approval. In the meantime, I had to make contact with the suppliers. I had to put in a credit application because knowing the job -- with each delivery, I would have to make payment so I used my Financial Statement. In order to build there, I used my Contractor's License. They honor California Contractor's License because I think the CRIT grounds also come to the California side, so they honored it. Of course, I had to show my Certificate of Insurance, Building Insurance, and Worker's Compensation Insurance. I believe it was \$30.00 or \$35.00 a month for the business permit, but knowing that it wasn't going to get done in a month's

KOBATA: time, I think I paid \$150.00 for my Business License. They didn't tell me how much I was supposed to put in for the Building Fee. Well, before the construction was over, they waived the Building fee because this was not a business venture -- it's a monument -- and then, my Business License, they waived that, too.

IRITANI: Oh, how much -- several hundred dollars, probably.

KOBATA: One-hundred-fifty dollars -- so they returned my check. It was just like a regular business venture to do anything, so I did it just like I was doing business in Sacramento.

IRITANI: Well, these supplies -- were they mostly here, or did you have to work with the suppliers around the area?

KOBATA: All the specialty equipment -- like the steel that was circular was especially of a different configuration. I had it fabricated here in Sacramento. Then I hauled it down there -- all the specialty things. All the standard things, like the rebar steel or any material that was involved that I could buy there, I bought it there.

IRITANI: In Phoenix [Arizona]?

KOBATA: No, I bought them in Parker [Arizona]. when I first went there, on July 7th and 8th, I did all the research as to where I'd have to rent the equipment. Then I had to bring a lot of additional Plans for them so they could give me the price -- you know, for giving me the sub-bid, so it was complicated. It would have been simple if it was in town, but there, everyone was a stranger to me, and I was a stranger to them. Fortunately, I had good cooperation all the way down the line.

IRITANI: Well, your Committee approved everything, and so

KOBATA: Well, they left me completely in charge, from their living quarters, where they ate, and everything else, completely.

IRITANI: Well, there's a lot of work that you did here in Sacramento -- shaping the forms and the steel that was used and uh. Who were the people that helped you?

KOBATA: Well, the people that helped me there -- there must have been about seven or eight. The ones that helped a lot were Kay Urakawa, Sus Satow, my brother [Jim Kobata], Sid Arase, and Mas Sunahara, Duke Takeuchi, Jim Namba, and June Sunahara. [George Sato, Oscar Satow, George Yomogida, and George Oki - follow-up volunteers].

IRITANI: This was all volunteered work?

KOBATA: All volunteered work, yes.

IRITANI: Yes, that was tremendous.

KOBATA: I would say, if this was done by an outside contractor, I don't think the Monument would've been built.

IRITANI: Yeah, it would've cost twice as much [laughter].

KOBATA: Well, maybe two-and-a-half times as much, so I don't think it would've been built. After knowing what it would cost, it would probably refer back to the simple little marker we had initially. Another thing, when we were negotiating with them, we thought perhaps we might get fund assistance or become -- what is that -- the Interior Department that handles these monuments and markers throughout the United States -- I don't know what you call it. Anyhow, we

IRITANI: Is that a Federal Department?

KOBATA: Yeah. At that time, the tribal people told us that they didn't want any other jurisdiction on their property. They wanted to have complete control on the Reservation. That's how come the Monument is privately owned by the Poston Monument Committee people.

IRITANI: So you got all this preparation work going on in Sacramento with your volunteer crew. When did you actually get ready to load it up, and the whole crew go down there? It seemed like it was in the Summer time?

KOBATA: Yeah, I got the site developer started to raise the ground six feet high, a hundred feet in diameter, and then the walkway, about a hundred feet walkway, with the slope so I had him do that. Meantime, I came back, and with the volunteers we started making this mold because we couldn't make the mold until we got approval of the Plan, so this came about in a different sequence. While they were doing the site preparation, we were back here making the mold. I guess we left here in August of 1992 with the completed mold.

IRITANI: Did you have trouble lining up the crew?

KOBATA: No, initially I think we had seven of us, and then June Sunahara came within a few days, so there were eight of us for the first two weeks. Then, two people left, so that left six of us. After the third week, three more people left. Sometimes, I was there by myself. Then Oscar Satow and my brother, Jim, through arm twisting, came on the second tour to help.

IRITANI: The meals -- one of the group was a cook preparing the meals? Did you use your RV?

KOBATA: Yeah, we ate in the RV except for breakfast. For breakfast, everyone was on their own because five of them stayed at the motel. So at morning break, lunch, and evening, they were all prepared by Sus Satow.

IRITANI: Well, this was August -- it was pretty hot, right?

KOBATA: Yeah, they told us [laughter] it was the hottest stretch they had in a long, long time. It was between 115 degrees and 118 degrees! You know, in the evening it would only cool down to about 90 degrees. You would walk outside from the air-conditioning and we could tell.

IRITANI: Did you try to 'knock off' early in the afternoon and then start early in the morning when it was still cool?

KOBATA: Well, the group of five who stayed in a motel had only one bathroom, so they started like about four o'clock in the morning, so before sunrise, we were already working at the site. We could barely see, you know.

IRITANI: As far as healthwise, everyone was okay and no accidents.

KOBATA: Only one had a problem -- Jim Namba got heat rash, so he had kind of a miserable time.

IRITANI: Did he see the doctor about it?

KOBATA: May Takeuchi, being a nurse -- we called her up to get a certain solution to help him, but I guess he did go to the doctor after he came home.

IRITANI: How long were you down there then?

KOBATA: Okay, so I was there -- of course, I came back in September -- my son got married so my wife says, "You gotta' get back for the wedding!" So I came back for the wedding and on the return trip, Kay Urakawa went back with me. He was there, was there for almost -- pretty close to three week to a one-month period with me.

IRITANI: During this period that you're working on the Poston Monument, you sort of forgot about your other jobs.

KOBATA: I just completely let everything else go. I didn't obligate myself to anything else.

IRITANI: So you finally finished -- when?

KOBATA: The plaque came Friday, I guess it was, and Tuesday was the Dedication Day, it might have been on Saturday, so we were busy putting up the plaque.

IRITANI: You had the palm trees in and ?

KOBATA: Yeah, the Takehara Landscape with Brian Masunaga and two Caucasian workers from the landscaping crew. They came in the early part of September.

IRITANI: That was another crew, huh?

KOBATA: Yeah, the landscaping crew. They came to put the palm tree in and irrigation

IRITANI: The water fountain - the drinking fountain?

KOBATA: Yeah, they were there for about three days -- or maybe they were there for three-and-a-half days.

IRITANI: How did it happen that you wanted to put in a water fountain? Of course, it's hot and dry there.

KOBATA: Well, I think that was good planning to have the water fountain.

IRITANI: Well, of all the ten [Camp] monument, Poston is the only one with a water fountain.

KOBATA: The reason why I had to be there so long was that they started to help us dress the slope berm of the Monument. Of course, that was Brian Masunaga's idea to not leave just bare dirt, and I think that has a lot to do with dressing up the Monument.

IRITANI: Well, to prevent erosion, have to mix some gravel or what?

KOBATA: The man that did the site development says that you have to get an inch-and-a-half of rock at least, smaller is not good, so he says to use that particular inch-and-a-half rock, that's what we did to dress up the walk. Then, what we had to do was to put a fence -- a cable fence around the place so that a motorcycle or people with

IRITANI: Yeah.

KOBATA: Four-wheel drive just won't drive up there -- just to deter that.

IRITANI: Oh, I see.

KOBATA: so that

IRITANI: So that was extra defense there.

KOBATA: so that was -- not in the Plan, but then for me to order pressure treated post, they just didn't have it. It had to be treated and then sent to us from Winslow [Arizona] which is about 400 miles away.

IRITANI: Where?

KOBATA: Winslow [Arizona], up in the hills. To put the fence in, dress the berm with crush rock wasn't end of work. I had to apply second coat Vanguard sealer against graffiti penetration to bollards and monument structure. The final second coat I sprayed Vanguard on was October 8, 1992. From the start of project in Poston, Arizona July 6, 1992 to completion, it was three month plus a day or two.

IRITANI: Did you have good relations with the CRIT people? How did they help out?

KOBATA: Oh, once we got started -- not knowing, going to be a strange place, it was questionable to do work.

IRITANI: Yeah

KOBATA: Yeah, once we got there, the old timers, especially the Hopi and Navajo Indians, would stop by and reminisce about fifty years ago, and so it was like old neighbors meeting old neighbors. The characteristic of the native people there traveling the highway, some of them with hay baler and some with cotton-picking machines

IRITANI: Oh, they

KOBATA: When they're driving down there, they'd always honk their horns and raise their hands, so we got accustomed to that. It was a friendly atmosphere. We got to know them quite well, and everytime I needed any equipment, the Bureau of Indian Affairs Water District Department was about three blocks away -- I told them, "You know, we have a load here, and we need to unload that with a crane." So I went there and asked this foreman of the crane operations, "Where do you guys get something like this? He says, "What time you want it?" [laughter] I told him that we wanted it about 11:00 o'clock. "You got it." he said. "You got it!". Then he came with the crane from the Water District Department, and besides, he brought four persons with him.

IRITANI: That crane helped you to do what?

KOBATA: The crane was used to unload the load from the trailer to put around the base of the Monument foundation. It was heavy, you know.

IRITANI: Sure, so the scaffolding -- did you haul it down from Sacramento, or did you rent some down there?

KOBATA: The scaffolding was the unusual scaffold that I bought for the Gedatsu Church with a stairway like a fire escape that fits right onto the scaffold. We took that from here because we needed to get up there -- thirty feet up in the air. Then have ready to do the construction, I took all the scaffolds I needed with this stairway.

IRITANI: From the base of the Monument to the top where that lift is -- how many feet was that, you say?

KOBATA: About thirty-five feet.

IRITANI: You had to have a scaffold all the way up?

KOBATA: Yeah.

IRITANI: Okay, now while this building of the Monument is going on, there's their group here that's working on the different plaques. It's six-sided, is it?

KOBATA: Yes, it's six-sided on the original monument.

IRITANI: So there's a group there that's working on the wording.

KOBATA: When we made the trip we in February, we stopped in Sun City [California] to see one of the foundries [information from Gene Itogawa about the plaque casting].

IRITANI: Yeah, he's with Parks and Recreation. So, he was

[End Tape 3, Side B]

[Session 2, July 2, 1996]

[Session 3, July 3, 1996]

[Begin Tape 4, Side A]

IRITANI: July 3rd. Do I have the right tape -- July 3rd?

KOBATA: Yes, today's the 3rd.

IRITANI: Tape Four of the oral history interview with Ted Kobata. We'll continue on the Poston project where the Bureau of Indian Affairs were helping out with the use of their cranes. Did they supply the manpower too?

KOBATA: Yes, when we hauled the mold from Sacramento to the Poston Monument site, the load on the trailer -- I guess it probably weighed over a ton -- after pouring the base of the Monument, we were ready for the mold to be placed onto the foundation of the Monument. One way to get this on there from the trailer to the base of the Monument was with a crane. The Bureau of Indian Affairs Water District Department was situated about four blocks from where the Monument site, and they assisted us by getting the load off from the trailer to the site through the use of their crane. They came with the crane, and they had no problem raising it up and then placing it onto the base. Then, another time we had them help us with the crane was when they

KOBATA: were topping off the Monument cylinder, some thirty feet up in the air, and the only way we could put concrete up - there top on the cylinder was with a crane, so at that time, they also helped us with use of the crane.

IRITANI: The hopper was some that carries the cement?

KOBATA: That's right. On the finishing of the pour, by this time, we didn't have the use of the concrete pump, so we had to send it back, and to finish off the last six feet, we had assistance from them by using the crane.

IRITANI: That was the top of six feet?

KOBATA: Yeah, with a top of six feet from the ground level, we were up there thirty feet in the air.

IRITANI: Were there other equipment or other ways that the CRIT people helped you folks out?

KOBATA: Yeah, they came there -- of course, this was at the Kiosk Dedication time -- they were there to bring their tractor with a grader to grade the area and the surrounding portion of the Monument site for people to have an area to park their cars and buses, so they really helped up in that area also. And the Poston Fire Department helped water the place down with their fire truck. I also want to mention the personal reflection of the community and the CRIT that I received during all this construction period. I believe the reason why they probably rendered assistance more than normally was because they were sympathetic towards our cause. The Indians were oppressed people also, so that had a great deal to do with their assistance to us.

IRITANI: They had empathy with our situation. Well, we have quite a bit on the Poston Monument. Could we go on to the Kiosk project? Let's see, that was a couple of years later?

KOBATA: The Kiosk was done last year.

IRITANI: Oh, in 1995.

KOBATA: Yeah, in 1995. The dedication was in relation to the Fiftieth Year Anniversary of the closing of the Camp.

IRITANI: Let's see, how did the idea get started -- the Kiosk?

KOBATA: Well, I guess with the Committee -- in fact, George Oki felt that the Monument site had to be enriched with some other structure or in some way, so that's how the Kiosk idea was born.

IRITANI: Was the Committee composed of about the same people that worked on the Monument or did you have different people for the Kiosk?

KOBATA: Oh, as far as the people that helped me on the construction, they were basically the same people again.

IRITANI: Yeah, the crew.

KOBATA: Right, right. I remember when we first started the idea and the planning of the Kiosk, there was a lot of pros and cons. Of course, we felt that we needed to contact Camp I and Camp III groups in San Diego and in Los Angeles, so at the Japanese Museum Family, uh, what was that -- Family Affair Fair that was held

IRITANI: The Family Expo, huh?

KOBATA: Yeah, the Family Expo in 1994 -- by that time, I saw Nancy Matsuda from Los Angeles and Dave Kurosawa. I spoke to them to explain that the next phase of the Poston Monument enrichment was to build a Kiosk. They were kind of neutral about it, but then I asked them if they would give us financial support. To that, they said they would, so that's the reason why we went ahead with the project.

IRITANI: Let's see, going back to the crew, you say that they were about the same people, but weren't there some of your wives or women who went to Kiosk to cook and so forth?

KOBATA: Yeah, this time Betty Kobata, Jean Arase, and Emi Nakashima helped by preparing lunch and dinner, and of course, Emi's husband helped us with the construction. He was originally from Heart Mountain [Internment Camp in Wyoming].

IRITANI: Oh, yeah -- what was her name, now -- Emi? Emi, Emi.

KOBATA: Nakashima, and her husband's name escapes me right now. They were the original volunteers of the Heart Mount [Internment Camp] barrack project, so they reciprocated by helping us with the Poston Monument project.

IRITANI: Well, you talked about cooking and preparation of lunches. Who took care of it during the construction of the Monument -- that was a couple of years earlier, wasn't it? Did the men take turns cooking?

KOBATA: Sus Satow did most of the cooking. He was a good chef.

IRITANI: Oh, he was a good chef, and no griping or grumbling?

KOBATA: Right.

IRITANI: What was the budget on the Kiosk? I imagine it was quite a bit smaller than the Monument.

KOBATA: I believe the goal was to have about \$50,000.00 contribution. The Kiosk wasn't going to cost that amount; however we needed funds for the maintenance and insurance. Therefore, we needed a perpetual fund that would give us enough interest money to support the maintenance and insurance.

IRITANI: Today, the Kiosk is finished. Do you know about much balance we have in the, uh, I suppose the Monument Fund and the Kiosk Fund are together or separate?

KOBATA: Right, it's a single deposit.

IRITANI: Any idea how much this uh ?

KOBATA: The treasurer was to have a trust fund of \$60,000.00, however, according to what I recall, the last report was around \$50,000.00 plus.

IRITANI: And they're going to use the interest from that to uh ?

KOBATA: Yeah, to perpetually cover the maintenance and insurance.

IRITANI: That's a pretty good fund there.

KOBATA: However, when I spoke to Nancy Matsuda in one of the conversations we had, she said that every time their group has a pilgrimage, they were going to assess so much toward the Monument Maintenance. I thought that was a pretty good idea. Most people, you know, find ten-fifteen dollars is a small amount, what they would lose in gambling to take a trip to Laughlin or Las Vegas.

IRITANI: So when did we have the completion or dedication of the Kiosk

KOBATA: I think it was on November 7

IRITANI: November 7th, uh '94 [1994] was it?

KOBATA: I beg your pardon?

IRITANI: November 7th, uh

KOBATA: Was the dedication.

IRITANI: Yeah -- '94 [1994]?

KOBATA: Last year, '95 [1995]. I guess I would like to mention how long it took to make the Kiosk mold. It took us three weeks to fabricate the mold in my RV carport. Then it took us two weeks there to complete it, but I spent well,

KOBATA: I could say three weeks because from the beginning to the end, there was about three weeks of construction there.

IRITANI: Three weeks at the construction site.

KOBATA: Of course, again -- from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, we utilized their crane. Another thing, I would like to mention is the Connor Byestema.

IRITANI: Now, this Connor Byestema - what was his title?

KOBATA: He's the head of the Environmental and Farm Regulator. That all has to do with farm spraying and so forth. At the Monument site, he prepared ground work for vehicle parking, and at Fair Ground tables and chairs for the November 7th Dedication. Just like at the October 6th, 1992 Monument Dedication. The American Baptist Church of Poston also provided us with the folding chairs, and they brought the lectern that was originally used at the Poston II Christian Church.

IRITANI: Oh, is that so. The main aspect of the Kiosk are those -- ah -- what do you call it -- containers or?

KOBATA: Dispensers. We had three dispensers and four plaques. One of the plaques, to get the approval to build the Kiosk, I went before the CRIT Resource and Development Committee and told them about the Kiosk to be built there. At that time, I took the liberty of telling them that one of the plaques was to be dedicated to the CRIT people for them to edit their own history, so they were pretty happy about learning that their history would be put on the Kiosk.

IRITANI: Let's see. I'd like to get to the Let's see, you mentioned one plaque was going to tell about the CRIT group. Now, the other three plaques on the Kiosk -- what were they about?

KOBATA: They were about the Camp life.

IRITANI: Yeah, Camp life and Poston history.

KOBATA: And some of the poems that the children wrote and, of course, about the agriculture there and to honor the eight of us that built the Poston Monument. That was on the same space that was used with the dispensers.

IRITANI: I understand that they're going to have a ceremony of some kind to tear down the barracks. Have you heard about that?

KOBATA: No, the only thing I know about that is that I read in Nichi Bei Times that the dismantling ceremony was going to be on August 18th, if I remember correctly, of this year [1996].

IRITANI: You mentioned something about the community people that you'd like to mention -- that helped you or influenced you. Did you have a list or reflection on the community people?

KOBATA: Referring to -- what is it, now, Frank [Iritani]?

IRITANI: Well, maybe around here where you're living or during your lifetime.

KOBATA: What gave me the interest to do these volunteer work?

IRITANI: Yeah, sure.

KOBATA: I would say that the main thing was that I became semi-retired seven years ago. Therefore, I could use my time for my own instead of doing the customer's work. Of course, I'm still doing customer's work, but then I'm not doing it full-time-wise, so that makes it easier on my part to volunteer to do these different projects, especially when it has anything to do with building, whether it's demolishing or whether it's construction or saving it for historical purposes.

IRITANI: So after retirement, you got into more of this volunteer work?

- KOBATA: Right, I can't say I'm retired completely because I still take on work whenever I have time or ... [pause] ... schedule to
- IRITANI: Oh, that's to do this and do that.
- KOBATA: Right, if it's within my scope of doing it.
- IRITANI: So some of these projects would include the Poston Monument and so forth?
- KOBATA: Yeah, right, the Poston Monument and the Gedatsu church, local church construction, or maintenance.
- IRITANI: This general contracting business is an important part of your later life. Have you thought about having somebody continue -- to step into your shoes, so-to-speak?
- KOBATA: I never tried to sell the business because a business as a general contractor is not like a restaurant or something that stays in one place that type of business, because each time I get a job, I need to estimate it or bid against other people to get the job, so each job becomes an individual project in itself. Of course, what does help is referral because of the past construction I've done.
- IRITANI: In other words, your past experience enters in
- KOBATA: Well, it does, and then like you mentioned, if anyone was going to take over the project, that's one reason; and another thing is that both of my sons are doing their own things, so as long as they're not goofing off, well uh
- IRITANI: They're happy in their work and uh, yeah.
- KOBATA: Yeah, right; however, my youngest son, Stanley, mentioned that too bad no one was taking over after building up the construction firm. You know, it takes a lot of equipment, tools and, of course, 'know how' also, and so he regrets that no one taking over.

- IRITANI: Well, you have quite an investment in your equipment and tools and property and so forth. Have you ever given thought to what might happen to that?
- KOBATA: Since I'm doing a limited amount, I still maintain and have kept most of my equipment. Where I had duplicate equipment, I've been selling them.
- IRITANI: We're getting near the end of the oral history. We got quite a bit accomplished and recorded. Was there something that we might have left out or that you wanted to mention?
- KOBATA: At this point, I think we have covered most of what I've done until this point; however, I would say that since I'm healthy, my chapter isn't closed yet, and of course this year I'll become seventy-two [years old].
- IRITANI: Well, you're doing pretty well at seventy-two [years old]. Maybe we can go back to World War II and days of the internment of the Nisei. How do you feel about what happened to the Japanese Americans if the War had not come along, and if there was no Relocation and Camps and so forth? I know it's hard to think what might have happened, but it did change the lives of many Japanese Americans, our Isseis and so forth.
- KOBATA: It's pretty hard to say at what point to go back to. If the War started but if we did not have to evacuate. I would say that the Japanese Americans would have contributed as they were during the War and after the War. I would say that if we were not interned, we would have carried on. At least as American like responsible people, you know, to think community, to their families, and to the public as a whole so I would say other than the eviction period of Evacuation -- other than that, I think we would have gotten educated and done as well.

IRITANI: It seems like, from the first time that immigrants landed in Hawaii and also later coming to the mainland United States, that there was quite a bit of opposition or discrimination and anti-Alien Land Laws and so forth. Then, today, there's still quite a bit of racism and anti-Asian sentiment. Some people feel pretty strongly about it, like Mary Tsukamoto, she's a real champion civil rights activist and so forth. How do you feel about the situation?

KOBATA: Now we're talking about how the Nikkei position ourselves today. Of course, we have to not only speak up, not being Evacuated but also being Evacuated, and to me the young men that volunteered to prove themselves loyal to this country and many gave their lives, and of course the large group of Hawaiian Japanese that volunteered, their numbers were much greater than the Niseis on the mainland. This had a lot to do with the outcome of how United States citizens treated us as a whole. Of course, there's always going to be other people that, I guess I would call them ignorant, you know, for not knowing the facts. That's why putting this all together; I wasn't able to serve during the War time; therefore since I'm only a survivor. I thought serve to preserve historical piece such as the Heart Mountain barrack to the Los Angeles museum [National Japanese American Museum] meant a lot to me.

IRITANI: I know you've been pretty busy with your family and your contracting business. How do you feel about politics, in general, and the work of Congressman [Robert] Matsui? He's a local Sacramento person. Do you know him?

KOBATA: Oh, yes. When he was practicing law -- of course, my sister-in-law's sister is married into the Matsui family. Of course, it has no connection to me, but then I knew Robert Matsui's father from way back when I was a youngster playing baseball, and so the family goes way back. Then, when he began practicing law in Sacramento, he purchased this home at 13th and H Streets. This was a Victorian house that I helped initially to make from, you know, a flophouse to his office, so I was involved in remodeling it. But then we could repair things and keep everything as original as possible because of the historical nature

IRITANI: Does the Matsui family still own the house?

KOBATA: No, I think it changed hands several times. At one point, I think Phil Isenberg and his group bought it, but I'm not sure who has the title to it now. My relationship goes back to the early days when he practiced law to when he became a [Sacramento] City Councilman, so did a lot of supporting of his efforts.

IRITANI: Mr. Matsui's father passed away that -- a year or two ago?

KOBATA: Yeah, a couple of years back.

IRITANI: Well, Ted, we've covered most of the important things and the highlights of your life, so we'll conclude this oral history. It will be transcribed, and you'll get a copy of the tapes and of the transcription. You can go through it and make any corrections or deletions or changes you feel necessary. Thank you very much. So this concludes the oral history interview.

KOBATA: I appreciate very much, Frank, for interviewing me. Thank you very much.

[End Tape 4, Side A]

NAMES LIST

Florin Japanese American Citizens League
Oral History Project

Interviewee_____Ted Kobata
Interviewer_____Frank Iritani

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| Tomiko | Ted Kobata's Second Older Sister | Ted Kobata | 3 |
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July 29th 1908.

I, the undersigned, do herein enter into a contract (to be binding on both sides) with the Pacific Coast Syrup Co., a California corporation, located in the city of Los Angeles, California, to wit: I to pick and deliver to the San Fernando express office and consign to the Pacific Coast Syrup Co., all the figs grown during the season of 1908 on the seven and one-half acre fig orchard owned by Dr. J. F. Wheat and located approximately $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of San Fernando. Said crop being owned by the Pacific Coast Syrup Co.

I agree to care for them in the best possible manner, picking and shipping the figs as fast as they reach the desired ripeness, and to so continue until the 1908 crop is gone. The Pacific Coast Syrup Co. are to furnish the boxes.

In consideration of the above, I am to receive eighteen dollars (\$18.00) for each ton (two thousand pounds) shipped. Same being payable to me at my request or order, when shipment is made. Figs to be weighed on arrival at the refinery of the Pacific Coast Syrup Co. Record of weights for comparison to be sent me daily on arrival of fruit.

In full agreement of above, I hereby affix my name and seal.

Name & Seal

F. J. Patrick

Pacific Coast Syrup Co.

W. A. Schum

R. W. Bennett
Witness

L E A S E .

THIS INSTRUMENT of LEASE, made and entered into at the Town of San Fernando, County of Los Angeles, State of California, this Eighth day of November, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Six, by and between the SAN FERNANDO MISSION LAND COMPANY, a corporation, organized and existing under the laws of the State of California, having its principal place of business in the City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, State of California, party of the first part, and F. Kobata, of the Town of San Fernando, party of the second part,.....

.....WITNESSETH:- That for and in consideration of the payments of the rents, and the performance of the covenants herein contained, the party of the first part does hereby lease, demise and let unto the party of the second part, for the term of one year, or until such time as one crop of onions, potatoes, or other garden stuff can be grown and harvested upon said land, described as follows:-

.....All of lot 22, and the east one half of lot 27, sec. 8, Tp. 2, N.R. 15, W. S.B.M.

The party of the second part agrees to pay Five Dollars per acre, for each and every acre of said land. Two Dollars and Fifty cents per acre on delivery of this lease, and Two Dollars and Fifty cents per acre, for each and every acre, on or before the first day of June, 1907. The party of the second part further agrees to keep said land thoroughly cultivated and free from all weeds of every kind, and as soon as said crop is harvested will deliver said land to the party of the first part, or its assignees or agent, free of all weeds, or other trash of any kind.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said parties have hereunto set their hands and seals, the day and year first above written.

San Fernando Mission Land Co.
A. G. C. O'Neil, Pres.....

F. Kobata.....

Sacramento, Calif.
Rt. 2 Box 3010
February 12, 1943.

W R A, Washington, D. C.:
Mr. H. S. Myers, Director.

Dear Sir:

In the case of Ted Tetsuo Kobata, 229-3-C, Colorado River Relocation Center, Poston, Arizona on form W R A-140 let me state he has been under my surveillance for at least sixteen years and I do not hesitate in any way to recommend him highly.

His schooling was of utmost interest to him as he was very outstanding as a baseball pitcher and was selected for the Sacramento High School team. He also belonged to a Science Social Club and was most devout in his attendance of the Baptist Sunday School in his local community.

It is impossible to list and describe all this youngman's virtues at this time but suffice it to say I am positive of his trustworthiness and desire to prove his loyalty to these United States.

Very Sincerely,
J. H. Fairbairn
(Jine J. Fairbairn)
Rt 2 - Box 3010
Sacramento, Calif.

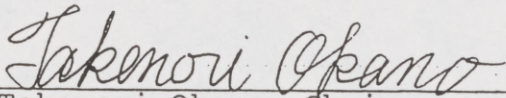
Gedatsu Church of America

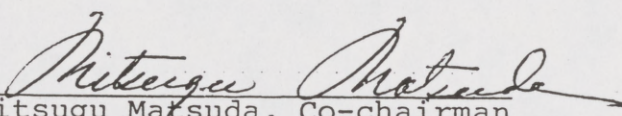
4016 HAPPY LANE
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95826
PHONE (916) 363-6054

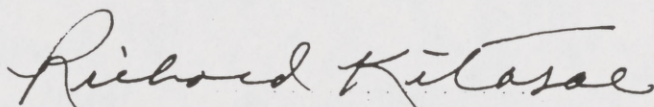
September 4, 1983

Ted Kobata

For the outstanding workmanship in constructing the Gochiseido and for your continuous cooperation with the Gedatsu Church during the construction period, we wish to thank you in helping us realize our goal. Your efforts and work will always be held in gratitude, not only by the Gedatsu Church members, but by all who will gaze upon the Gochiseido and stand in awe and in admiration.


Takenori Okano, Chairman
Gedatsu Kai of Japan


Mitsugu Matsuda, Co-chairman
Gedatsu Church of America


Richard Kitasoe, Co-chairman
Gedatsu Church of America




ASSEMBLYMAN MIKE HONDA

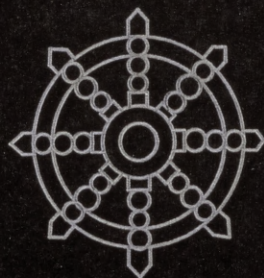
*M*ike Honda was born in California and has lived in Santa Clara County for over 40 years. His family returned in 1953 after being interned at Amache, Colorado during WWII. Mike attended local public schools, graduating from San Jose High School in 1959 and moving on to San Jose State University. Mike interrupted his studies to answer President Kennedy's call for volunteer service. He volunteered to join the newly

created Peace Corps, serving for two years in El Salvador as a community development specialist. He returned to San Jose State to earn his B.S. (biology) in 1968, and received another B.A. (Spanish) in 1969 and an M.A. (education) in 1973.

Mike's involvement in politics began in 1971 when he was appointed by then Mayor Norm Mineta, to the city of San Jose's Planning Commission. He served as chair several times during his eight years of service. In 1981, he was elected to the San Jose Unified School Board and served until his taking office with the Board of Supervisors in January of 1991. He was elected in November 1990 to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors with over 60% of the vote and reelected in 1994 with an even larger margin of support.

During his tenure on the Board of Supervisors, Mike has provided leadership on a variety of issues impacting the quality of life in Santa Clara County. Mike has been a leader in the area of women's health by co-sponsoring a successful grant application for the award of \$440,000 for the county's Breast Cancer Early Detection Project, and also increasing funding for battered women's shelters. His leadership has also had a major impact on efforts to preserve our environment as he was instrumental in establishing the Open Space Authority. Mike is also a dedicated advocate for collaborative efforts to fight against and prevent juvenile crime and serves with other officials on the San Jose Mayor's Gang Task Force.

Mike and his wife, Jeanne, have been married for 28 years. Jeanne teaches at Baldwin Elementary School in south San Jose. They have two children, Mark, 22 and Michelle, 19. Mark is employed as an aerospace engineer with Hughes Aircraft and Michelle attends Northern Arizona University. 



PRESENTED TO

TED KOBATA



IN RECOGNITION AND APPRECIATION
FOR YOUR UNSELFISH CONTRIBUTION
OF TIME AND EQUIPMENTS RENDERED
TO THE FLORIN BUDDHIST CHURCH



70th ANNIVERSARY
MAY 20, 1989
FLORIN BUDDHIST CHURCH

Indians, relocated Asians endured harsh war years in Arizona

by Shirley A. Yates

An improbable combination of circumstances put me, a 20-year-old just off the farm from Ohio, in the Japanese Relocation Center at Poston, Ariz., in the spring of 1944.

I had married a man who wanted to leave Ohio and seek adventure, which turned out to be in Arizona. He departed first, and I followed him to the southwest, where I became a homemaker.

Before I arrived, I had never seen an Asian person in my life, and beyond knowing a bare minimum about the mass evacuation of the Japanese from the West Coast, I did not realize that there was a vast difference between our American Japanese citizens and those from Japan who were committing all those atrocities in the Pacific War.

I was naturally afraid, because I did know that Poston was one of our American concentration camps, and, I thought, a real prison.

The Caucasian bureaucrats and schoolteachers who were in charge of the three camps of displaced Japanese citizens were housed in quite nice barrack-type apartments, four to a building, with swamp coolers to keep the searing heat at bay.

In contrast, the Japanese lived in tar-paper barracks, quite different from our comfortable homes.

By the time I arrived camp operations were pretty well settled. I had expected barbed wire fences and all the trappings of prison, and I was surprised to find none of those things.

Everyone was free to come and go within the confines of the camps and surrounding desert. Poston was situated on the Colorado River Indian Reservation 17 miles from Parker, the nearest town. Parker was a dry and dusty desert crossroads, with one grocery store.

The Colorado River Indian Reservation was at that time one of the worst examples of Indian poverty and its resultant squalor. Periodically, the Colorado would flood and inundate the low-lying land the Indians cultivated for subsistence crops.

My Story



Shirley A. Yates

There was only Hoover (now Boulder) Dam on the Colorado then. It would be years before Glen Canyon and Parker dams were built, or any of the smaller diversion projects. The Colorado was free then to do whatever it would.

Coming from the fertile Ohio farm country, I was horrified at the poor soil and desert conditions, and the low mud-adobe huts the Indians lived in scarcely seemed fit for humans.

I got acquainted slowly, making some friends of the younger Caucasian teachers, but mostly I was drawn to the young Japanese because I attended school with some of them.

As I learned bits and pieces of the story of how they came to be there, I was more and more horrified at what had been done to these people. I was young and idealistic, and this was my first glimpse of what mass hysteria can do.

Probably one of the most important scenes I have ever witnessed, and one that will stay with me until the day I die, happened one evening when I was walking in the surrounding mesquite near Camp II, and I saw a fire in the distance.

As I came closer, I saw that it was just a campfire, burning in a cleared area, and surrounded by 20 or so Japanese schoolchildren. They were singing, and the song I heard as I walked nearer was "God Bless America."

Such is forgiveness. None of us is perfect, and governments can make mistakes, even ours.

I have never gotten over hearing that song in that setting, and it has affected me profoundly all of my life, and blazes into my mind again, whenever I encounter discrimination.

Nineteen forty-four was really the last year of the camps. Thousands of Internees had been relocated all over the United States, and by the end of the year nearly everyone who was going away was gone. Only those who intended to go back to their homes in California were left, and soon the camps were closed down.

Hearing about the wonders of California from my Japanese friends made me want to see it for myself, and so before going back to Ohio, we drove over the Tehachapi Mountains. Somehow we landed in Sacramento and have been in the area ever since.

I did not return to Arizona until 1992, when I went with my husband to his WW II ship reunion in Tucson. We drove into Parker, and out to the site of Poston. The Indians there were helpful, tried to give me a few bearings and were so interested that I had been there.

There was nothing recognizable; a few barracks, maybe not even the originals. The road was changed, and all the landmarks were gone. It would have been unusual to have four anything. I knew that, but I was disappointed.

The surrounding desert though was another story. The desert had bloomed! Parker Dam has brought water, and what was an empty desert with only mesquite and tumbleweed is now green and glowing.

The growing season is wonderful, the Indians have prospered, and the mud huts have been replaced with beautiful, well-kept homes. The Indians have built large, well-equipped schools, with wonderful administration buildings and

roads, and everything looks green and prosperous.

The old gravel road between Poston and Quartsite, on which you never drove without two spare tires, is a broad, beautiful private highway that belongs to the Indians, and we definitely observed the low speed limit! The old sign out of Quartsite that warned "87 miles, no gas, no water" is long gone, replaced by stoplights and, hard to believe, traffic.

There is a wonderful story of how the Indians helped the Japanese people when they first arrived in early 1942, by showing them how to survive in the desert.

In return, the Japanese showed the Indians how to farm intensively when water came. This is a perfect circle of two oppressed peoples sharing knowledge to the benefit of both.

Last year, in 1993, we passed through again, and at a roadside rest area near the post office in Poston there is now a wonderful

monument, with the story of that period engraved on each side of the shaft. So many from Sacramento contributed to the building of the monument, and I was so proud of those who would not let the story die.

We spent a long time there, and cried tears of grief for the ones who are gone now, and especially for the Japanese soldiers of the 442nd Battalion, whom I had watched go off to fight in Italy for the country that had displaced and imprisoned them for so long.

Such is forgiveness. None of us is perfect, and governments can make mistakes, even ours.

I am glad that this piece of our history is being taught in our schools now. In the '50s and '60s it was not, and I have done what I could through all these years to tell my bit of this story to my children and grandchildren, and to all the young people I come in contact with. I am so glad that our government finally apologized.

It was long overdue, but better late than never. There was real suffering there, and so much humiliation. I say again, as I have said so many times before, I know what went on. I was there, and I saw it.

Shirley A. Yates is retired and lives in Placerville.



The Sacramento Bee, April 7, 1994

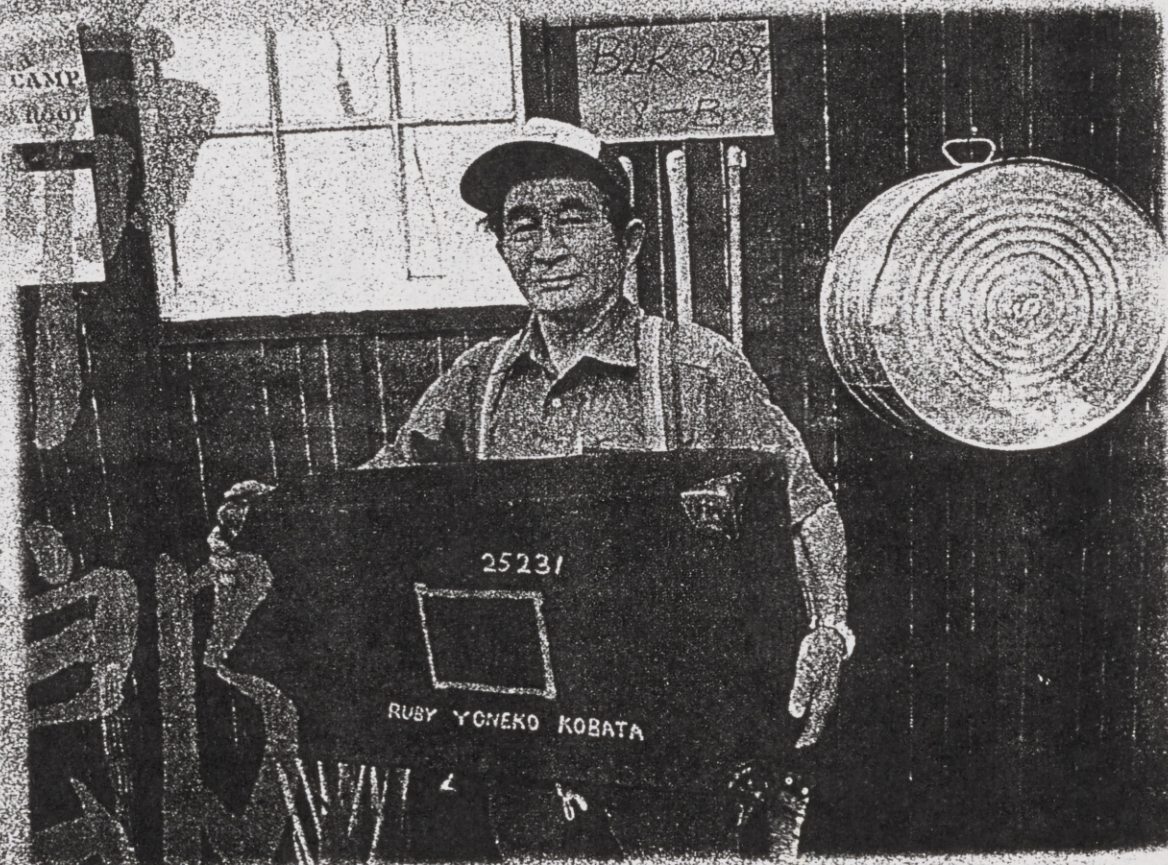
SACRAMENTO

News & Review

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 1995

Coming Home

10 Locals Reveal
Internment Experiences



"I was pitcher for Sacramento High School's varsity baseball team. After Pearl Harbor we went to school pretty much as usual until May 20, 1942 ... suddenly I was on a choo-choo train to Poston."

—Ted Kobata

SINCERE APPRECIATION AWARD

Presented To

Ted T. Kobata

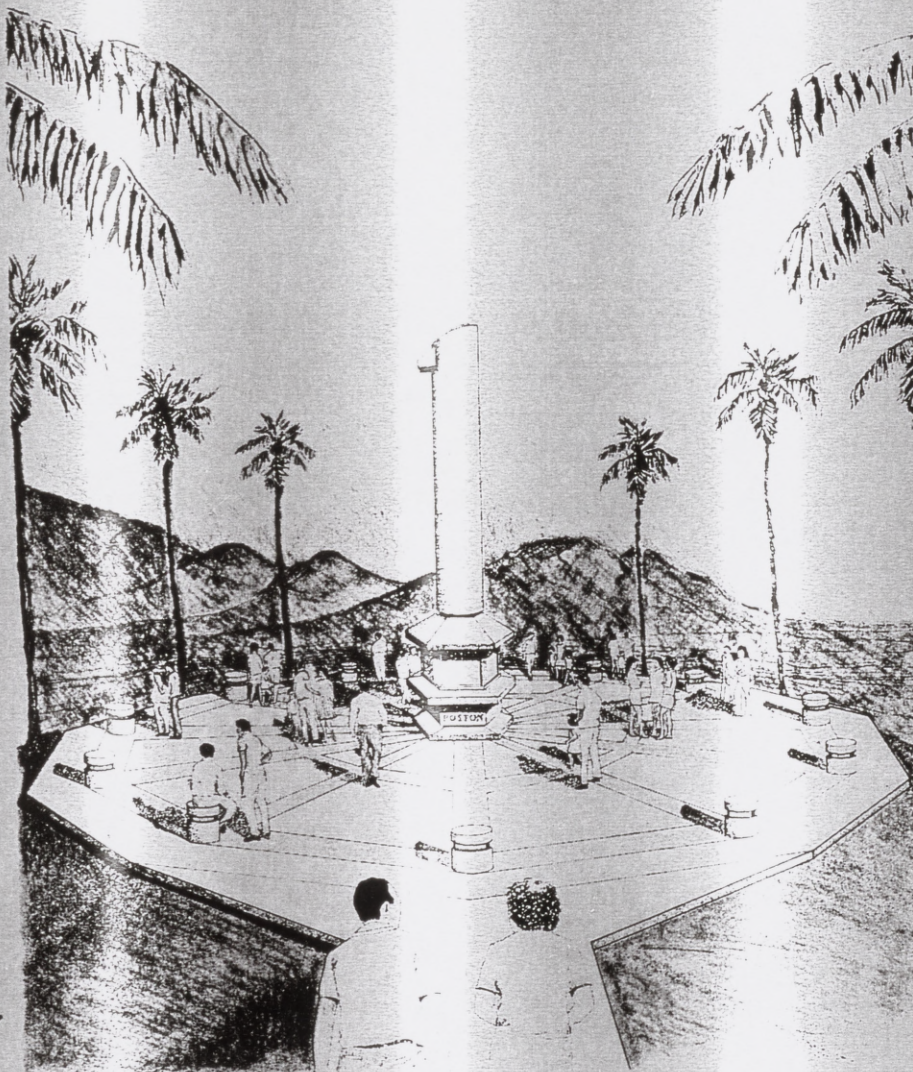
IN RECOGNITION OF YOUR COMMITMENT,
DEDICATION AND TOIL IN THE HOT ARIZONA
SUN IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE POSTON
MEMORIAL MONUMENT IN POSTON, ARIZONA.

THANK YOU FROM ALL OF US FROM THE
AMERICANS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY
FORMER POSTONIANS AND NISEI
VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II FOR
BUILDING US A MAGNIFICENT MONUMENT.
YOU HAVE MADE US ALL VERY, VERY PROUD.

OCTOBER 6, 1992

*Poston Memorial
Monument Committee*

George S. Oki, Sr.
George S. Oki, Sr.
Co-Chairman



COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

ROGER P. FONG
Human Resources Administrator



ANGELA M. SHERROD
Director of Human Resources

September 12, 1995

Ted Kobata
3600 Faberge Way
Sacramento, CA 95826

Dear Ted:

Thank you again for helping us on our recent examination process for **Structural Inspector**. The selection of public employees of high caliber is an important step in providing effective local government.

Your interest, judgement, and experience were significant contributions to the testing process. We sincerely appreciate your service to Sacramento County.

Sincerely,

Mary Long

Mary Long, Personnel Assistant
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES



COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

BUILDING INSPECTION DIVISION FIELD OFFICE

4101 Branch Center Road
Sacramento, California 95827

Phone: (916)366-2796

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PUBLIC WORKS AGENCY

DOUGLAS M. FRALEIGH, Administrator
WARREN H. HARADA, Director
Public Works Administration
ROBERT F. SHANKS, Director
District Engineering
H. D. KERTON, Director
Solid Waste Management
TERRY T. TICE, Director
County Engineering

July 5, 1996

From: KENNETH D. WELCH
PRINCIPAL BUILDING INSPECTOR - RETIRED
BUILDING INSPECTION DIVISION
COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO

Subject: TED T. KOBATA

Ted Kobata became a major contributor to the advancement of the Sacramento County Building Inspection Division in 1971 and continues to be an asset to this day.

Ted has served as the Construction Industry Representative on oral interview boards many, many times during the past 25 years. He has always been willing to share his knowledge and dedicate his time when called upon.

Ted's keen sense of fairplay, unquestionable honesty, and unique ability to see the potential of the individual has been instrumental in the hiring of qualified inspectors, supervisors, and managers, resulting in this Building Inspection Division being recognized nationally as a leader in our profession.

KDW:jrl

Ted Kobata's statement regarding Jim J. Fairbairn

The Fairbairns befriended the Kobata family when prejudice against the Japanese Americans was prevalent from the public at large on the West Coast--California, Oregon and Washington. Prior to evacuation May 28, 1942 during the war years, and after returning home to Sacramento February 24, 1945. they have assisted our family to adjust during the time of difficulties.

In September of 1943, I was out doing seasonal work (sugar beets, lettuce, onions, potatoes) in Caldwell, Idaho, and had no transportation. I made arrangements with the Fairbairns to drive the only old Ford pickup we kept from selling in Sacramento to Reno, Nevada. At the same time, Yas Hashimoto, prewar neighbor, had his 1939 Dodge sedan, family car, driven to Reno. Reno was outside the restricted area.

For the welfare of the family I sponsored and made arrangement for application to have them relocate from Poston Relocation Center to Ontario, Oregon. On May 22, 1944, the family (father, mother, Yoshiko, Jim and Gladys) made transition from camp to join me in Ontario. Again, I imposed on the Fairbairns. This time to collect and arrange for shipment of our stored household goods (washing machine, refrigerator, cooking utensils and bedding). After 10 months of family relocation to Ontario, the exclusion restriction was lifted on the West Coast. I returned home to Sacramento February 24 to make preparation, and by March 3, 1945 the family returned to Sacramento.

In repeated situations, starting from scratch against odds, the Fairbairns helped with our resettlement needs.

My appreciation to a cordial friend.

Ted Kobata
Sacramento, CA
July 10, 1996

SACRAMENTO JACL

presents its annual

**COMMUNITY SERVICE
RECOGNITION DINNER**

honoring

**DORIS MATSUI
RALPH T. SUGIMOTO
TED KOBATA**

Installation of 1998 Officers



**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1997
RADISSON HOTEL**

The Sacramento JACL Chapter: “PREPARING FOR THE NEXT MILLENNIUM”

Welcome to our annual Installation and Community Service Recognition Dinner! The Japanese American Citizens League is one of the nation's foremost advocates of civil rights. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, 24,000 member public service organization devoted primarily to protecting the basic civil liberties of all Americans. The JACL is supported by annual dues and contributions from its chapters and members. In its seven decades of existence, the JACL has become a national institution and is widely recognized as one of the country's foremost defenders of individual rights.

As part of the national organization for sixty-six years, the Sacramento JACL Chapter has promoted this civil rights program so that liberties are preserved for each new generation. The Sacramento JACL has garnered praise for the effectiveness of its civil rights advocacy. It has built strong relationships with public officials and their staffs. The Chapter has worked creatively in coalition with numerous organizations on particular issues of mutual concern to ensure that our collective voices are heard throughout this country.

Since its inception, the Sacramento JACL has produced many local and national leaders – many of whom are here tonight. This past year, the National JACL and our Chapter organized the first ever California Leadership Conference in Sacramento. We will again assume a leadership role in this important endeavor next year. To prepare

itself for the next millennium, our Chapter will heighten its already energetic role in leadership development at the local, state and national levels. The Sacramento JACL will again recruit and support our members in attending the National JACL Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. in the coming years. We will continue to develop our Chapter officers for National JACL positions.

The very foundation of the Sacramento JACL is based on a voluntary work force. Our fundamental principles and the mission of the Sacramento JACL clearly state that the organization will be voluntary by nature, led by volunteers and accomplishing its achievements with a work force that donates their services. We again look forward to the continued assistance and support of our members and the community that we serve in the coming years. We especially like to thank our tireless office volunteers who operate our Sacramento JACL office and execute many of the Chapter's programs.

The Sacramento JACL has numerous exciting activities planned for 1998 and we encourage all of you to become active participants. You can be assured that your contributions to and support of the Sacramento JACL will never perish, and will always remain alive in future members and leaders of the Chapter.

Our sincere gratitude to all of you for joining the Sacramento JACL this evening as we honor this year's community service recipients. ❧

*—The 1998 Sacramento JACL Chapter
Officers and Board of Directors*



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

Masao Satow Building • 1765 Sutter Street • San Francisco, California 94115
Phone: (415) 921-5225 • Facsimile: (415) 931-4671 • Email: JACL@hooked.net

November 16, 1997

Dear Sacramento JACLers and Friends:

I am always delighted to join chapters to celebrate their individual installations each year. This evening, Sacramento JACL will pay tribute to three outstanding individuals. They are Doris Matsui, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Public Liaison, Ralph Sugimoto and Ted Kobata.

These three honorees have distinguished themselves with their successful careers, becoming trend setters and role models for all of us to emulate. We are proud of them and are indebted to them for their vision, actions and leadership.

It gives me great pleasure to join you in congratulating Doris, Ralph and Ted. They are certainly deserving and we wish them continued success.

I also want to thank the outgoing officers and board for their service and congratulate and extend my gratitude on behalf of the JACL to the incoming officers and board members for their willingness to accept their duties and responsibilities. You are the backbone of our organization!

And finally, best wishes for a memorable evening and every future success to the Sacramento JACL chapter. You have distinguished yourselves in the areas of civil rights, social and senior concerns, youth and cultural activities.

With warmest regards,

Helen Kawagoe
National President
Japanese American Citizens League

Program

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|----------------------------|---|
| Call to Order | Toko Fujii <i>Event Coordinator</i> |
| Pledge of Allegiance | Shigeo Yokote <i>Commander Nisei Post 8985 VFW</i> |
| Opening Remarks | MC Michael Sawamura |

INTRODUCTIONS

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| Messages | Helen Kawagoe <i>President National JACL</i> |
| | Illa Collin <i>Supervisor, County of Sacramento</i> |
| | Roger Dickinson <i>Supervisor, County of Sacramento</i> |
| | Joe Serna <i>Mayor, City of Sacramento</i> |
| | Sam Pannell <i>Councilman, City of Sacramento</i> |
| | Chief Art Venegas <i>Sacramento Police Department</i> |
| Invocation | Rev. Bob Oshita <i>Buddhist Church of Sacramento</i> |

DINNER

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| Installation of 1998 Officers | Herb Yamanishi <i>Director National JACL</i> |
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PRESENTATION OF HONOREES

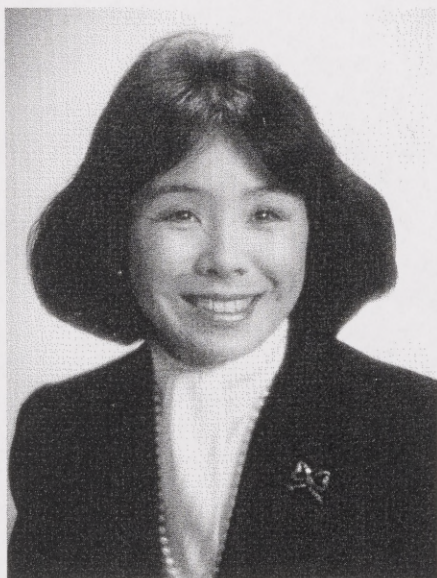
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|-------------------------|-----------------|
| TED KOBATA | Kuni Hironaka |
| RALPH T. SUGIMOTO | Hon. Mike Honda |
| DORIS MATSUI | Lori Fujimoto |

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Keynote Address | Hon. Mike Honda <i>Member California State Assembly</i> |
| Benediction | Rev. Edward Iwamoto <i>Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church</i> |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

| | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Closing Remarks | Toko Fujii |
|-----------------------|------------|



DORIS OKADA MATSUI

Doris Matsui, a life-long Californian, has been active in national public service and community-based philanthropic activities for over twenty years. She was appointed by William J. Clinton to serve as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Public Liaison in January, 1993. Both in Washington D.C. and in her hometown of Sacramento, Mrs. Matsui is recognized as a leader, spokesperson, and advocate for causes ranging

from the arts and education to global relations.

As Deputy Assistant to the President, she participates in executive White House staff meetings and takes part in informative discussions on critical domestic policy issues. Her principle areas of responsibilities include education, children and families, and the nonprofit sector.

Mrs. Matsui's work at the White House is a continuation of her long term work with families, education, women and international cooperation. She is a past president of the Congressional Club, a bipartisan civic, social and philanthropic organization comprised of spouses of members of Congress, the Cabinet and Supreme Court Justices. Her Congressional Club leadership resulted in a national campaign to promote early detection of breast cancer and led to a partnership with the YWCA to conduct screening for low-income women.

She has also been a leader in Peace Links, a worldwide organization which promotes cultural exchange and international understanding. She has also worked to enhance economic and social empowerment in her community. She served on the National Board of Christmas in April which organizes volunteers to make home repairs for the poor and elderly, and while in Sacramento, she served as president of the board of directors for Sacramento public television station, KVIE. Mrs. Matsui also served as an active member of other boards including the Sacramento Symphony, the Sacramento Science Center and Junior League of Sacramento.

Mrs. Matsui was raised in the small farming community of Dinuba, California and is a graduate of the University of California at Berkeley. Mrs. Matsui is married to Congressman Robert T. Matsui (5th District, CA). Their son, Brian, attends Stanford law School. 🐾



RALPH T. SUGIMOTO, JR.

Ralph Sugimoto was born in Sacramento on November 12, 1941. He was interned with his family in Amache War Relocation Center in Colorado. Growing up in Walnut Grove, he was active as a member of the Jr. YBA, YBA and Dharma YBA at the Walnut Grove Buddhist Church. He participated in track, tennis, basketball and football at Courtland High School.

Ralph attended Sacramento State College (1959-1963) and began working for the Office of Auditor General (1963-1973). He included a two-year stint with the U.S. Army during those years. He joined the accounting firm of Pfanner and Tate in 1974 and became a partner in 1975. He is now partner in the firm of Tate, Propp, Beggs & Sugimoto.

He is married to the former Pearl Tachiki and they have two children — Stephanie, who has two children, and Douglas, who recently graduated from Harvard Law School and is working in Los Angeles.

His hobbies include golf, dining out, watching sports, meeting people and more golf.

Professionally, he is a member of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the California Society of Certified Accountants, Sacramento Chapter, the Sutter Club and the Valley Hi Country Club.

Ralph also serves on several boards. For the Sacramento Betsuin, he has served as president, treasurer and auditor, as well as chaired the 1991 church bazaar. He is currently serving as the president of Buddhist Churches of America National Board of Directors.

He is a member of the Board of Directors Sacramento JACL and is its current treasurer. He also serves on the JACL Endowment Fund Board of Trustees. He is a member of the Board of Directors of Matsuyama-Sacramento Sister City Corporation, and served as president 1994-1997. He has served as board member, treasurer and president of the Asian Community Center of Sacramento Valley which is the parent organization of the Asian Community Nursing Home. He is an active member of the East Lawn Community Advisory Board. He was one of the organizers of and served as treasurer of the 1992 Japanese American History Exhibit of Sacramento. ❷



TED KOBATA

Ted Kobata was born in Sacramento on July 20, 1924. He attended Edward Kelly School and Sacramento High School through 11th grade when the family was interned in Poston, Arizona Relocation Center. Before the camp was officially closed in November 1944, the family moved to Ontario, Oregon until February, 1945 when they returned to the Mayhew area of Sacramento County.

Ted married Miyo Frances Iwasa in 1951. They have three children: Glenn, Hannah and Stanley and three grandchildren: Thomas (12), Ann (9) and Kyle (3).

His main vocation was in the general construction business. His more outstanding supervised/volunteered projects are: The Gedatsu Church, Mayhew Baptist Church, Poston Memorial Monument and Poston Monument Kiosk. With great support and cooperation from family, relatives, friends, the Poston Committee and the Colorado River Indian Tribes people, Ted made the environmentally harmonious Poston Monument a reality. He contributed much of his time, funds, technical knowledge and use of his construction equipment to these projects.

He also volunteered with the dismantling of a Heart Mountain, Wyoming, camp barrack, and then assisted with the reassembly adjacent to the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo. This relocated barrack was a part of the Museum's Exhibit "America's Concentration Camps," 1994-96.

Most recently, Ted volunteered his services and completed the fabrication of the replica of the Japanese American Korean War Veterans Memorial Monument for the purposes of making the 4'x12' solid aluminum pieces transportable for display in all parts of the country.

A member of the Florin JACL, he participated faithfully in its Annual Time of Remembrance programs with his leadership of the Internment Camp Replica Barrack project. With a volunteer crew of 7-8 men, the replica barrack component parts were transported, set up and taken down at each TOR program at the Florin Buddhist Hall, Elk Grove School District Building, and CSUS JA Archives Exhibits.

In other community services, Ted has been a member of the Oral Review Boards of Sacramento County Building Inspection Division Field Office for the past twenty-five years. During the years his sons were growing up, Ted was Assistant Boy Scout Leader and assisted with building projects at O Ki Hi Scout Camp as well as Little League snack bar and meeting rooms. 28
